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ESSAYS ON GOETHE

ESSAYS ON
GOETHE

edited by

WILLIAM ROSE

with 4 pages of illustrations

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Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

August 28th, 1749 – March 22nd, 1832

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FOREWORD

TRADITION has long presented two pictures of Goethe to the general reader. The first is that of the young poet who burst upon eighteenth-century Germany with ebullient lyrics pouring from his heart, who wrenched from his soul the tragic story of the love-sick, world-weary Werther, and who carried in his pocket the beginnings of what was to become one of humanity's most prized possessions, the unique poem, symbolic both in its comedy and its tragedy, of Faust's wager with the Devil and its poignant first-fruits in the pitiful fate of Gretchen. Perceptibly the portrait changes. The emotional fires have died down, and in a mansion at Weimar, surrounded by cold marble statuary, there presides a revered old sage absorbed in the abstractions of philosophic and scientific thought, the precipitate of which is to be found in the chemico-psychological sexual relationships of the *Elective Affinities*, the Utopian didacticism of *Wilhelm Meister*, and the esoteric mysteries of the later *Faust*.

This dual picture is all too simple, and since there is no writer in the whole of world literature whose life, thoughts and emotional impulses are more fully documented, it is a matter for wonder that such a richly endowed personality should, until submitted to the more analytical study of recent years, have appeared in two such irreconcilable aspects. The structure of Goethe's personality was complex in both youth and age. In his early dramas he revealed the conflict within himself between the surge of feeling and the dictate of reason. Even now it is not altogether clear what upheaval of the spirit moved Goethe in his late thirties to snap the link that bound him to Weimar and Charlotte von Stein and sent him packing off to Italy. He was sixty-six years of age when his love for Marianne von Willemer inspired him to produce, in collaboration with her, the poetry of the *Buch Suleika* of the *West-östlicher Divan*. He was seventy-four when out of his hopeless passion for the nineteen-year-old Ulrike von Levetzow he wrote the deeply-moving *Marienbader Elegie*. Clearly the "Olympian serenity" of the aged seer masked fires that smouldered

dangerously. The young Goethe was never wholly lost even in the octogenarian.

To those who study him closely there emerges at least a glimpse of the pattern of mind and being that underlay the phenomenon which was Goethe. His poetry and prose, in their infinite variety, blended with the meditation and scientific research by which he sought to penetrate to the springs of life. Creative emotion and reasoned thought were locked together, and though his thinking was unscientific by modern standards the intuition which guided the spontaneous lyric poet did him no mean service in his scientific achievement too. The quest for the primal forms of life, his anticipation of the evolutionary process, and his perception of the elemental forces which spur man to his goal, for good or ill, provide a link between his creative, imaginative writings and his creative, imaginative research, though the restless probing and sweeping urge are less evident in the more serenely contemplative of his works and his later renunciatory philosophy than in the dynamic of his earlier nervously-wrought or titanic heroes, in much of his poetry, and indeed in his own life.

If Goethe was a divided personality, in the sense that emotion never lost its power to break through the ordered harmony into which he had composed his spirit, the occasional resulting disequilibrium was never chaotic. Since thought and emotion, at their ultimate source, were finely interwoven, the momentary resurgence of feeling in his later years, unbalancing though it may at times have seemed to be, enabled him to distil his experience into poetry of spontaneous and vital perfection. He kept his genius under control to the last, and never were poetry and wisdom more intimately fused. Compounded as he was of antitheses, he was yet perhaps the most complete human synthesis mankind has ever produced.

W. R.

GOETHE AND THE WORLD OF TO-DAY

by Barker Fairley

GOETHE'S claims on the attention of a modern reader are probably greater—they are certainly more varied—than those of any author we might name. Merely to enumerate them all would fill a chapter. To begin with, he dominates or, we might say, bestrides the modern literature of his country so completely that we cannot study it at any point without finding sooner or later than we have to study him. There is perhaps no writer of importance in the main stream of German literature on whom his light or his shadow does not immediately fall. All of them, comfortably or uncomfortably, feel his nearness and are compelled to react to it.

There is no easy parallel to this phenomenon in other literatures, most of which—English and French certainly—are protected by their length and their amplitude. German literature, we have to remember, is of fairly short duration as a great literature. When Goethe was born in 1749, it is scarcely too much to say that there was no great German literature; there was no work or author powerfully affecting a German reader or reaching out to a foreign one, unless we except the opening cantos of Klopstock's now little-read *Messias* which had appeared the year before. To find a

similar condition in French literature we have to go back to before the sixteenth century and in English literature to before the Elizabethans, if not Chaucer.

Thus the years of Goethe's youth are precisely the years in which German literature was becoming important. By the time he reached manhood the critical foundations of the new literature had been laid, chiefly by Lessing, Winckelmann, and Herder, and all that was lacking was the inspired poet to consummate the movement, which Goethe forthwith proceeded to do, followed by Schiller and Hölderlin and in due course by a crowd of others, who extended and buttressed his achievement but who remained without exception secondary to it, so that he now stands as a massive peak among foothills rather than as the highest point in a chain.

If Goethe had been an author of the Shakespearean type, the case would have been different. Shakespeare, supreme as he is, is a poet of concentrated achievement, willing to put all or most of his eggs in one basket—the Shakespearean drama—and to leave the rest of the literary adventure to others. Goethe, on the other hand, not content with the lyrical form that was instinctive in him, tried his hand, or, should we say, meddled with all the other forms as well, writing dramas in verse and prose, historical or legendary; novels long and short; epic and idyll; librettos and cantatas; essays and reviews; and whatever else attracts a man of letters. In consequence he may be said not only to have set modern German literature on its feet, but also to have explored it up and down and to have determined not a little of its future course. Much that is best in the writers that came after is a development from beginnings that go back to him. Paul Hankamer aptly says in his *Spiel der Mächte* (1947) that in him German literature experienced its youth and also experienced its age—"Die deutsche Dichtung, die mit ihm jung geworden und gewesen war, wurde nun mit ihm alt"—and that Goethe in the course of his own writing anticipated more than a century of what was to come.

Thus it is not merely a question of his own generation or of the generation that followed; the German writer and poet in our time, in the twentieth century, feels his presence as strongly as they did. Thomas Mann is as near to him as Gottfried Keller; Gerhart

Hauptmann as near as Grillparzer. We do not fully understand either of these leading figures in recent German literature until we recognize that Goethe presses on them almost as if he were their contemporary and, for better or for worse, interferes with what they write. The deviation of Gerhart Hauptmann from the naturalistic drama in which he excelled to the poetic in which he was insecure was in the main a movement towards Goethe or, at least, towards the Goethean drama. His assumption of Goethe's mantle in later life, whether real or imputed, is all part of the picture and serves to show how close Goethe was, or was felt to be, and how readily the question of their relationship raises itself. It goes without saying that so unhistorical a relationship—one in which a dominant figure from the past moves up into the present like a living person, as Goethe does visibly in Hauptmann's *Mignon* (published posthumously, 1947)—is not without its drawbacks for the later writer, whose inability to measure up with the standard thus set can scarcely be called his fault, but is rather part of the spiritual environment in which German authors have to operate.

If we turn to Thomas Mann, we find him too moving into Goethe's sphere, not in the drifting way of Hauptmann, but with his eyes open and in command of the situation. Any doubts as to the connection with Goethe, whether in the mind of Thomas Mann or his readers, must have been dispelled by the writing of *Der Zauberberg*, in which the line of descent from Goethe's fiction is so unmistakable. More significant, however, than parallels of this sort between one work and another, which can be drawn and have been drawn in some detail, is the circumstance that Mann was driven to express himself directly on the subject of Goethe and that, in doing so, it was not enough for him to dispose of Goethe essay-wise as a critic; he also had to deal with him as a novelist. The spectacle confronting us in *Lotte in Weimar* (1939) of one major writer re-creating another on a large scale, not setting him at a distance but bringing him close and letting him think aloud in our presence—neither sparing him nor diminishing him —is not easy to match in our own literature. We should have to imagine Thomas Hardy breaking the series of Wessex novels to do one on Shakespeare. The difference is that in English literature

the creative writer does not feel the need of any drastic settling of accounts with a great predecessor, while in German literature the existence of such a need in relation to Goethe is not questioned and occasions no surprise when it manifests itself.

This aspect alone of Goethe's relation to the modern world forces him strongly on our attention. Yet it has never been more than half explored. "The history of the German attitude to Goethe during the nineteenth century", says Professor Willoughby, "has yet to be written. It would prove one of the most fascinating and one of the most difficult tasks of literary criticism". How much truer this remark becomes when we add the twentieth century to the nineteenth and try to bring the study up to date. Consider the complex and elusive case of Rilke, who began by rejecting Goethe and keeping him severely at arm's length—another of the typical German attitudes to their great man—until one day his defences broke down and Goethe had to be admitted. In a letter of August 2nd, 1904—when he was nearly thirty—he said that he "lacked the organ necessary to receive anything from Goethe". In another of February 8th, 1912, having discovered the letters to Auguste Stolberg and the poem *Harzreise im Winter*, he reversed his position and admitted that his admiration for Goethe, now that it had begun, was very great and "quite unqualified".

It is unlikely that Goethe would be found to stand in so urgent a relation to modern German literature—a relation so much more problematic than that of Schiller—if he were not himself, in his own work, a very modern poet and writer. Yet it may be doubted whether this is generally recognized even in his own country. The notion of a Goethe remote and canonized, an "Olympian" or a "Classic" as he is mistakenly called on all occasions, is deeply entrenched wherever his name is known. It is worth noting, however, that two of the most sensitive and questioning minds in modern French literature, Gide and Valéry, are almost as close to Goethe as Thomas Mann. In Gide we can observe a lifelong affinity and can see, too, that his conception of Goethe has grown and changed in the course of his life. As for Valéry it is sufficient to note that he spent some of his last days writing a *Faust* of his own

or rather, to quote his own words, seeing how Goethe's two protagonists, Faust and Mephistopheles, looked when transferred from their day to ours. The fragments Valéry left are deeply impregnated with Goethean associations and leave us in no doubt as to the intensity of his preoccupation with the subject.

The obvious counterpart of this in modern English literature is George Bernard Shaw, whose link with Goethe can be traced not only in the realm of evolutionary thought but also in the use he made of the dramatic form. The great extension of drama which Goethe's *Faust* performs, by virtue of which it transcends the theatre and becomes unlimitedly philosophical in its dimensions, is repeated variously in Shaw's use of drama, which in *Man and Superman* and *Saint Joan* and, more notably, in *Back to Methuselah* breaks the confines of the earthly stage and expands on a supernatural scale to include hell and the Garden of Eden and the afterworld and so, like *Faust*, to travel in actual plot "as far as thought can reach" or

Vom Himmel durch die Welt zur Hölle.

We have only to consider how much more intelligible the form of *Faust* is to-day than when it first appeared to see how closely it bears on contemporary literature. When *Part II* was published some of its best readers were unable to make head or tail of it, and even the formal innovations in *Part I*—the first *Walpurgisnacht* for example—were apologized for by Goethe's interpreters more often than admired. Regarding *Part II*, George Henry Lewes wrote, in 1855, that in the presence of this poem he felt more embarrassment than with any other of Goethe's works, evidently lacking the kind of experience in poetry that would enable him to get inside it. At this point any undergraduate of to-day has the advantage of him. To-day, indeed, we might be expected to hold the opposite view and say that nothing of Goethe's embarrasses us less, since here we find, wonderfully anticipated more than a century ago, a conception and a practice of poetry that speaks to us almost as if it had come in our own time. The very sophistication which made the later portions of *Faust* unacceptable to some of its early readers commends it to us to-day. In its irony, its

urbanity, its multiplicity of meaning, its intellectualizing of poetry in all its forms, it is exactly in line with modern trends and belongs rather to the twentieth century than to the nineteenth.

The modernity that we so readily discover in Goethe's poetry need not surprise us when we consider how modern were the conditions under which he wrote. Backward as the Germany of his boyhood seems to-day, it provided an environment for poets not different in one important respect from that which confronts them now. For him as for them the old order had lost its authority; institutions were crumbling or had weakened their hold; the gifted individual had to work out his own position, unhelped by the world around him and, for the first time, fully conscious of his predicament. This was Goethe's essential position in the eighteenth century as it was Rilke's in the twentieth and that of so many writers and artists of genius in the intervening years. To this extent Goethe can be regarded as standing at the beginning of an age that is now nearing its close. It was with him and his contemporaries that the modern dilemma emerged. *Torquato Tasso* with its masterly analysis of the torn poet is proof that he clearly recognized it.

It is for this reason that Goethe has so much to say to poets, artists, intellectuals, to-day. The conclusions he reached were founded on their premises; he speaks to them as one of themselves. Yet if he could return and take stock of the literary world in its present state he would not find it to his liking. Not, at any rate, in the poetry that it produced. More and more he came to believe that poetry should be for the many and not for the few. He wished it to get rid of its privacy and address itself lucidly to mankind on objective topics. Its subject-matter, he maintained, should be taken from the world about us, not directly from the soul of man. Late in life he went so far as to say that poetry at its height seemed to be wholly external; when it turned inwards it was on the road to decline—"Auf ihrem höchsten Gipfel scheint die Poesie ganz äusserlich; je mehr sie sich ins Innere zurückzieht, ist sie auf dem Wege zu sinken". There can be little doubt that in this sense he prized epic poetry above dramatic or lyrical. If Shakespeare was the hero of his youth, Homer was the hero of his maturity.

This puts him, with all his modernity, somewhat out of step

with recent fashions in poetry, which, if he could return to inspect them, would seem to him not unlike those that he distrusted in his younger contemporaries. To-day he would find the same subjectivity that he found then, the same preoccupation with inner problems, the same writing for oneself or for small circles. Poetry, he would say, had travelled a very short distance since his time and not in the soundest direction. That this, or something very like it, would be his judgment, no serious reader of him can doubt.

But if we ask why and with what authority he speaks, there can be no ready answer. Nowhere in his writings do we find him discussing poetry as a thing by itself, to be dealt with in its special compartment. It is characteristic of Goethe that we cannot discuss any question with him in isolation, but are compelled to see it in a larger perspective. Any inquiry, however confined, takes us beyond its confines for an answer. "I know from what you have told me yourself", wrote Schopenhauer to him on September 8th, 1815, "that the literary business—*das literarische Treiben*—is always secondary with you and that life comes first." And while we might be tempted to modify this statement, we could not think of reversing it; we recognize its substantial truth. Any question of the relation of Goethe to poetry, whether in his own day or in ours, will involve his relation to things outside poetry.

The first of these, both in its importance to him and in its importance to us, is science and the pursuit of science which consumed so large a portion of his time. If we take a typical day in Goethe's adult life—that is to say, almost any day at home or even on holiday during the course of half a century—we shall find him spending a portion of it on practical work in one field of science or another. It might be measuring skulls or sorting mineralogical specimens or botanizing in or out of doors or working with his optical apparatus or catching-up on the latest journals. Visitors from a distance were regularly surprised to find him, a poet, so much more inclined to discuss science than poetry. Of a schoolmaster who talked with him in 1792 Goethe wrote: "He was surprised that I would have nothing to do with poetry and seemed instead to be putting all my energy into the study of nature."

The nineteenth century was inclined to make light of this aspect

of Goethe, on various grounds. First, because, then as now, an interest in science was not required or even expected of a poet; also because his contribution to science was admittedly slight beside his contribution to poetry. Moreover many of those who granted him the right to study science, if he wanted, looked on him with a certain suspicion as one who came to the subject with preconceived ideas, appropriate perhaps in a poet but regrettable in a scientist, whose duty it was to put preconceived ideas aside and be, as it was thought, objective. The general run of Goethe's readers took it for granted that his scientific writings were a side-issue and that they could get the best out of him without reading them. This was Carlyle's attitude, as it was Matthew Arnold's and that of most readers since. Seeley, reviewing Goethe in his *Goethe Reviewed after Sixty Years* (1894), followed their lead and J. G. Robertson carried it to its logical conclusion and even deplored Goethe's concern with science. For him it was merely an undesirable tendency, hostile to the creative life.

It is safe to say that now the scale has turned and brought Goethe nearer to us by virtue of the very part of his work that was formerly neglected. The reason is partly that his interpreters have found themselves unable to do without it and in some cases have used it as a key to the understanding of him. But the deeper reason is that the times have changed and forced a reckoning between the arts and the sciences that is growing more insistent year by year. The power of science, and above all the destructive power of science, now stares us so starkly in the face that we have to come to terms with it. It has taken the pressure of events to bring us to a sense of the urgency that Goethe felt a century and more ago.

At this crucial point in our cultural life Goethe may prove to be of special assistance. The position he took was not that usually found in men of letters, but much more radical. Their tendency, even when they respect and welcome the growth and the contribution of science, is to safeguard the humanities against it by reserving their spiritual priority. Science, they say or imply, can go so far and no farther; the humanities, and especially poetry, can take over at this point and proceed into the rarer regions, from whence they return bringing religious strength to the dogmatic and the

undogmatic alike. Some such conviction is deeply rooted in Western civilization, if indeed it is not one of its main props. It can be heard or overheard in universities and places of learning, in arts faculties as well as in theological, and, often enough, from the lips of scientists themselves, for whom presumably science is good for weekdays, but not for the Sabbath.

Thus even in the minds of those who seek to bring the humanities and the sciences together the age-old dualism usually persists, keeping the two apart as before. It would be natural to assume that Goethe shared this attitude, but the assumption gets no support from his writings. We shall search them in vain for so much as a hint of it. Nowhere does he suggest, great and inveterate poet though he was, that the poetic faculty has these exclusive powers. From the beginning he seems to have been content to equate it with science and to hope that it might progress towards the expression of similar verities. There are times indeed when he gives the scientific impulse the lead and subordinates the poetic to it.

What we can learn from Goethe at this point is that both science and poetry, if they are to become parts of a common discipline, must change from what they were when they were separate. Poetry, so conditioned, changes in so far as it tends increasingly to express what is completely experienced rather than what is only partially so, much as the scientist tries to finish his researches before publishing his results. It changes also in that it tries ultimately to say what is felt to be true rather than what is conceived imaginatively. No one can read the late verse of Goethe without sensing that something of this sort happened to him. His lifelong concern with science, we begin to see, slowly disqualified him for writing the kind of poetry he wrote when he was young and compelled him to feel his way towards another kind which was consistent with science. If the nineteenth century insisted on preferring his early verse to his later and argued or was prepared to argue that the direction in which Goethe moved was essentially a movement away from poetry, this may prove to be only the view of an age that failed to keep pace with him. When we consider how steadily poetry has been losing its hold on mankind and how small a part it plays in the world, it is pardonable to look for new directions

for it to move in and to wonder whether Goethe, who is at once so contemporary and so little used, may not supply one of them.

The chief objection that has been raised from the scientific side is one that has considerably less weight than when it was first heard. We have seen far too clearly what comes of science when it operates, or pretends to operate, without a philosophy to hold it against Goethe that he had one. He may not have foreseen our present quandary in its exact form, but he would not be surprised by it. His instinct told him that all our studies must be united in a common aim and that we cannot forget this with impunity. His whole life is eloquent of this belief and we are at last beginning to agree with him. This is why Goethe, as a type of scientist, is so much more impressive than he was fifty years ago; fifty years from now he may stand higher still. If the non-Marxist fails to see this, the Marxist will. For it is only in Marxism to-day that we find the close integration of science and art on a philosophical plane that we find in Goethe.

This contention may not be in line with the usual view of Goethe, which tends to identify him with tradition rather than with progressive forces, but it is one that we shall have to reckon with sooner or later. Georg Lukàcs makes a beginning in his *Goethe und seine Zeit* (1947) when he points out that the social and political backwardness of Goethe's Germany, confining as it was for better minds, was not without its compensating advantages. Precisely because of their comparative remoteness from politics and the great world Goethe and his contemporaries were able to indulge a speculative power, an adventurousness in thought, exceeding that of more fully integrated countries and so in the long run to fertilize and enrich European thought from what once seemed an unpropitious quarter. For it was not in France or in England but in Germany, or chiefly in Germany, that the most challenging movement in modern philosophy, the Marxist dialectic, was formulated and, as Lukàcs reminds us, Goethe was involved in the formulation as well as Hegel.

This is not the place to estimate the extent of his involvement, though, when we consider his rejection of dualism, Christian or humanist, and his confirmed belief in polarity, an essentially

dialectical conception, as a main clue to nature's process, we can see that it was not negligible. If a conjecture may be hazarded it must be this: that the dialectical materialist to-day will find support for his ideas in Goethe's writing just as easily as the evolutionist yesterday. In saying this it will not be claimed that Goethe was a social reformer or that he can be treated as a partisan in world affairs now. His position is less simple than that and possibly more interesting.

On the face of it nothing is easier than to place him on the traditional side of the fence and to point to him as the crowning instance of what the established forms of society were able to produce. In such a view he appears as the very symbol of the individualism we fear to lose when we say, rightly or wrongly, that Western civilization is threatened with extinction. He, if anyone, represents the consummation in self-development of that bourgeois world in which he lived out his long and fruitful existence and which we still feel to be continuous with ours. The man who insisted that the fulfilment of personality was the supreme happiness must seem to many to have spoken prophetically in anticipation of the day when that happiness would be menaced. This is a view which seems to identify him with the old order and to range him against the new.

The difficulty of contenting ourselves with this view of Goethe is that it associates him with what we have to admit is a disorganized world when, as we can see from his attitude to the question of science and poetry, his philosophy was one of organization. He believed deeply and even passionately in notions of unity, integration, and wholeness; and we cannot lightly associate him with the opposite of these. It is true that he worked out his conception of life mainly in other than social terms, concentrating his interest on the study of nature and making this study contributory to the understanding and management of the individual life. Yet he insisted throughout that the laws he had arrived at were universally valid, all life, even life in its least natural forms, being in his eyes a part of nature. His philosophical findings would be largely, if not completely, invalidated if we restricted their applicability. His whole existence cries out against such a restriction. In this spirit

we are entitled to feel our way cautiously forward and to ask what social and political views he would have arrived at, if he had lived to extend his thought more explicitly in this field.

Approaching him with this question in mind, we discover that he was not as remote from social theory as is commonly thought. The proof of this may be gleaned in many places but it will be found conclusively in the less familiar parts of *Wilhelm Meister*, which, however obsolete it may have become as narrative fiction, remains of considerable importance to-day as the chief vehicle for Goethe's thoughts on society and the state. *Wilhelm Meister*, it may be noted, is a work that dogged Goethe through life almost as long as *Faust*. He began to write it when he was about twenty-eight and he was not clear of it till he was about seventy-eight. If *Faust* stayed with him for sixty years, *Wilhelm Meister* stayed with him for fifty. But while *Faust* was written for the most part in great bursts of inspiration separated by long intervals of quiescence, *Wilhelm Meister* was written more deliberately and, it would seem, was more continuously in his thoughts. Moreover, in writing *Faust* he was committed by the nature of the legend to an approach through the great individual and could not easily shift the approach, whereas in *Wilhelm Meister* he was from the beginning free to look at mankind socially and to set the individual in his place among others. Thus while the social argument in *Faust* only half-emerges and consists chiefly in a few lines towards the close about men putting their shoulders together without our quite knowing for whom or for what, *Wilhelm Meister* is conceived from the start in terms of community and is not dominated by any one person, even Wilhelm being more a receptacle than a living person. Thus the novel serves to supplement and to correct *Faust* at the point where, as a world-poem, it most needs correction. If we want to know what social ideas were at the back of Goethe's mind when he wrote Act V of *Part II*, we can turn to the second half of *Wilhelm Meister*, the *Wanderjahre*, and get the answer.

Here we can see what surprising changes fifty years of pondering have wrought in a theme which initially showed such strong leanings towards a light bohemianism, with the hero content to find his vocation as manager to a troupe of wandering players

entertaining the nobility. In its late stages we find that, while the work has admittedly forfeited its integrity as a piece of fiction, it has developed surprisingly in its social argument and justified its curious progress by turning into something that there was little or no promise of in its beginning, a Utopia or, at any rate, the draft or blue-print of one. In the *Wanderjahre* the title acquires an unexpected meaning when the protagonists, or most of them, emigrate to the America of a century ago to build a new society, unimpeded by the trammels of the old world where all is dilatory conservatism—"In der alten Welt ist alles Schlendrian, wo man das Neue immer auf die alte, das Wachsende nach starrer Weise behandeln will"—and determined to show how to begin again at the beginning and build a society truer to nature—" wie man eigentlich von vorn beginnen und einen Naturweg einschlagen könne". "Now you see", says a member of this new society, "what can be made of man. We are so cluttered up with useless things, a beggar's cloak patched together out of habit, inclination, drift, and caprice. What is best in us, in endowment and potential, we neither know nor use." Perhaps the most significant, certainly the most radical, passage in this strangely groping book is that in which Goethe subordinates the claims of the property-owner to the claims of those who work, and admits that if he once thought his true fatherland was to be found where he prospered he now believes it is where he is of use to his fellowmen—"Wo ich nütze, ist mein Vaterland".

Enough has been said to indicate that Goethe has retained his closeness of contact with advanced thought from his day down to ours and that we cannot yet look back on him as a figure belonging to the past. Just as surely as he stays abreast of modern literature, both German and not German, he stays abreast of modern thought and makes his contribution to it. How much longer he will retain this closeness it is impossible to say. But it is dffiicult to foresee a time, even a distant time, when his work will become outdated. He made it clear both early and late that his thought and his inspiration were derived from the natural world, or, as we might prefer to say, from biology, and he may be said to have explored this aspect of experience more completely than anyone

before or since, combining, as he did, the emotional approach of the artist and poet with the intellectual and methodical one of the philosophical scientist. While this biological or organic approach to life and its problems is not necessarily the final one and, as we have seen conclusively in recent years, is not without its pitfalls, it remains one of the basic approaches and will never be eliminated. That is to say, we cannot conceive of a development in civilization which will put man at such a remove from growing things that he will be able to disclaim his connection with them and shape his thoughts accordingly. To the end of time he will observe the changing seasons, the budding of plants, the pulsing of his blood, and the thoughts germinating in his mind, and recognize here an affinity or a brotherhood of forces, which he will be prompted to enjoy and to investigate and from which he will strive to extract what insight and wisdom he can. So long as he does this he will be drawn to Goethe and will be able to read him with profit. No author ancient or modern has more to offer to those who come to him in this spirit. He has the advantage over Wordsworth, who is his nearest English counterpart, that his nature impulse was not arrested in early life but remained active in him year after year almost to the day of his death, his late writings often reading like the maturing of his early ones, as if they were the fruits of the tree that he planted when he was young. He has also the advantage over nature philosophers of the older world, such as the Pre-Socratics who are his truest forbears, that his work is not recorded in fragments but presents itself to us with incredible fulness so that we can re-experience his life and thought with him almost as if it were our own.

He was greatly favoured as compared with other poets and philosophers who have a message to deliver in so far as he was able to convey his message without obtruding it, his best readers being probably those who drift into reading him without knowing why and who only slowly arrive at the underlying views. This may have retarded the recognition of his importance in strictly philosophical circles where it is still customary to survey the development of German thought without him, but it greatly extends his initial appeal to mankind. Readers of every persuasion can come to him and find an open door. It may have been possible once to

speak of a Goethe cult. This was when his reputation was not yet fully established and a little band of appreciators led the way. From then on he became the property of mankind, in the minimum sense that there is no country or community in which he may not have his followers.

But it takes more than openmindedness or an undogmatic manner to make an author widely approachable. He has to rely on the medium of language and it is on the use he makes of this instrument that his appeal will largely depend. Goethe, who began to write nearly two centuries ago, succeeded in creating a speech for literary purposes which has not yet proved obsolete. There may be exceptions, the esoteric rhythms and syntax of *Pandora*, for example, but, if we come to them from Stefan George, they do not affect us as archaic. Or the occasionally involved prose of his old age; yet we shall find Thomas Mann writing not very differently. The great body of Goethe's work, whether in prose or in verse, is as accessible in its language as it was to his contemporaries. When we consider that Goethe is so far away in time as to stand almost midway between us and Shakespeare, it is impossible not to reflect on the linguistic distance of the latter and the linguistic nearness of the former. And while this may lead to a variety of reflections on the relative potentialities of the two languages, it leaves Goethe with an advantage that cannot be gainsaid. Shakespeare may re-establish his contemporaneity with us on the stage where the action brings the words to life again, but as a poet to be read he is partly lost to us and has to be recovered with diligence. It may be bold to say that this will never happen to Goethe, but it is certain that the beginnings of it are not yet perceptible.

Something may be due here to other than temporal considerations. Shakespeare's style was presumably difficult even in his day, if only because of his rapid and complex play of metaphor. Goethe is an almost opposite case. From the start he wrote with a simplicity that we should have said was incompatible with the highest flights, if we had not his example to disprove it. *Faust*, which we cannot help returning to in any discussion of his modernity, is rooted in popular, almost in vulgar, language. There are parts of the poem that move up into elevated forms, as when

Goethe allows Helena to recapture in German the accents of Classical Greek or when he lets the wily Archbishop revert to stilted Alexandrines to put the Emperor in his place. But prevailingly it stays close to common speech and demonstrates as no poem before it the wealth of great poetry that can be extracted from this source. The supreme example is Gretchen who speaks more like a child than an adult, as when she comes home and finds the house empty, lights a lamp, opens a window, and uneasily wishes her mother were back:

> Es ist so schwül, so dumpfig hie,
> Und ist doch eben so warm nicht drauss.
> Es wird mir so, ich weiss nicht wie—
> Ich wollt die Mutter käm nach Haus.

or when she voices her surrender to her lover by saying simply:

> Ich habe schon so viel für dich getan,
> Dass mir zu tun fast nichts mehr übrig bleibt.

What we are apt to forget is that the whole poem is keyed to these passages, so that even Faust's concluding speeches, which rise confidently to the summit of the argument, stay well within the range of colloquial prose and could be printed so with good effect. When at the close of his life he says in his outburst to the apparition of Care that he has simply raced through the world, snatching at every pleasure, dropping one and taking up with another and so storming his way through life in a mighty alternation of desire and fulfilment until now at last the pace is beginning to slacken, we recognize one of the sublime moments in the poem. What we may fail to recognize is that it is written in words almost as artless as Gretchen's:

> Ich bin nur durch die Welt gerannt.
> Ein jed Gelüst ergriff ich bei den Haaren,
> Was nicht genügte, liess ich fahren,
> Was mir entwischte, liess ich ziehn.
> Ich habe nur begehrt und nur vollbracht
> Und abermals gewünscht und so mit Macht
> Mein Leben durchgestürmt: erst gross und mächtig,
> Nun aber geht es weise, geht bedächtig.

It was by working in this direct way, closer to speaking than to writing, that Goethe found himself as a poet of genius and it is a way of working that, in spite of digressions into Classicism and exotic modes, he never departed from for long. While other poets seem to write in order that we should read them, Goethe seems to talk to us directly. Consider the lucid speech-quality of such a poem as *Morgenklagen*, in which he describes incidentally the coming of the noisy day after a night of waking:

> Und der Tag ward immer hell und heller;
> Hört' ich schon des Nachbars Türe gehen,
> Der das Taglohn zu gewinnen eilet,
> Hört' ich bald darauf die Wagen rasseln:
> War das Tor der Stadt nun auch eröffnet,
> Und es regte sich der ganze Plunder
> Des bewegten Marktes durcheinander.

Very few poets can lift the colloquial so effortlessly to the level of poetry. Then there is the *West-östlicher Divan* where he had every inducement to lose himself in intricacies and subtleties and yet the conversational note is dominant. If he had not preserved this closeness to direct and even racy speech it would have been impossible for him to treat us to the wealth of proverbial verse that came from him in late years. It is worth noting in respect of Goethe's nearness to popular forms, even when conveying his most difficult thoughts, that the lines in which he gathers together more of his wisdom in narrow space than anywhere else in his writing, expressing his faith in the divine law in nature, his sense of the process of life in terms of clash and resolution, and his comprehension of the unity of it all from the ground we stand on to our farthest-soaring thoughts, are cast in the still audible accents of a nursery rhyme, written as a lullaby for his little grandson. Wisdom was probably never carried so lightly before:

> Ewig natürlich bewegende Kraft
> Göttlich gesetzlich entbindet und schafft;
> Trennendes Leben, im Leben Verein,
> Oben die Geister und unten der Stein.

We see then that Goethe's way is at once ancient and modern, reaching back to popular and gnomic forms that are almost as old as history, and also re-discovering in the contemporary world the half-forgotten resources of the spoken word and the vernacular. There is probably no great writer who has succeeded in conveying so varied and profound a meaning in such simple and widely intelligible terms. It may not be easy to see what kind of poetry the coming age has in store for us, but it is difficult to think that Goethe's kind will be alien to it. The tide is turning, in the English tradition if not yet in the German, in favour of the natural as against the artificial basis of poetry and here, with all his difference, Goethe is at one with our day.

The only barrier that remains between him and his wider public is that of his mother-tongue to which he was committed willy-nilly. He had much to say in late life about world-literature as a pooling of the best the various nations had to offer for the edification and the uniting of a greater community transcending the old boundaries. But he never trifled with thoughts of a world-language, though the whole bent of his mind would seem to call for it. He trusted rather, while deeply conscious of the shortcomings of language, to the basic content of good poetry as something that would come through the ordeal of translation and reassert itself in the new medium. Perhaps he did not fully realize how untranslatable he was, even into a sister-language. It would seem that the very simplicity and spontaneity that he was master of is the hardest quality to reproduce in another tongue. This must be why Dante and Homer have fared so much better at our hands than he. If this means that there is no satisfactory short-cut to him and that those who want to read him properly must read him in his language, it is well to remember that the desire to read him is in itself a sufficient reason for learning his language and could be counted on to keep it alive even after all other reasons for learning it had disappeared.

GOETHE
AS LYRIC POET

by Ronald Peacock

IT is characteristic of the present time that poetic taste is averse to the romanticism of the eighteenth century, which it finds naïve or jejune, but is on the other hand partial to the subtler romanticism of the nineteenth century. The earlier phase was a revolution of sentiment and like all revolutions optimistic. The nature piety was a present voluptuousness as well as a nostalgia, and the romantic felt himself confidently, if not inside the paradise of innocent goodness, at least at the gates. These exuberances are not to be recaptured in our disordered age. On the other hand, the self-consciousness, the schizophrenia, the conflicts and intellectual embarrassments, the craving for innocence, in the midst of hyper-awareness of guilt and cultural failure, these symptoms of later and sceptical romantics awaken sympathy, and the writers in whom we observe them are linked in a psychological history which has been continued into the present century.

In this sharp difference between early and later aspects of the romantic attitude we might discover the governing influences on our feelings about Goethe's poetry. It is relevant to recall the strictures he himself passed on his early work, together with his distaste for the younger contemporaries who were elaborating romantic

forms. His criticism of Werther, later in life, his positive distress at the morbid creature his imagination had sent into the world, are well known, and so is his castigation of romanticism as something pathological. He himself had taken a step beyond Werther, and "primitive" poetry, and the passionate exaltation of organic nature. He did not altogether deny his beginnings; and the modern observer, with a strong feeling that much of Goethe's thought and poetry, viewed as a whole, is essentially romantic, will not accept his antipathy to Wertherism at its face-value. But his maturing outlook did certainly involve a criticism of the romantic spirit, apparent from the time of his stay in Italy. Whilst, therefore, round about 1800, the younger generation of Novalis, fed on the transcendental philosophy, was intensifying romanticism, refining a fairly understandable nature religiosity into an esoteric symbolism at once philosophical, mystical, and poetic, Goethe was searching for something more realistic, more moral, more *human*, which might be less glamorous than an other-worldly idealism but would comprehend more truth about the human situation and give a better picture of it. The younger generation were hurrying poetry along in *one* direction, developing *one* of the facets that, taken together in a historical view, add up to the total of all poetry; and they were right in their generation. Goethe, born the greatest master of his language into the age of European romanticism, was endowed with a genius too comprehensive to be only romantic; and in consequence we see him in the peculiar historical position of supplying antidotes to romanticism long before others had become aware that it needed them, indeed, whilst they were just discovering its most ecstatic and intellectually exciting modes. Hence occur some curious paradoxes in his work. The most notable is a high degree of introspection, which produces a perfectly romantic work like *Werther*, and contrasting with it a high degree of the power of impersonal presentation, apparent for instance in *Hermann und Dorothea*. In most of his works these two qualities are inextricably blended. But the general tendency is to correct an excessive introspection by turning the mind towards the external world, whether it be nature, or history, or human society. In consequence there are always romantic undercurrents in Goethe's

work, even very late; but at the same time his total message or effect is either non-romantic or more than romantic. After a resplendent contribution to the romanticism dominated by Rousseau and Herder, Goethe drew away from it; and he did so before the philosophies of Fichte and Schopenhauer had developed its inexorable logic and made it sophisticated, providing the background for many disunities of the nineteenth century. Wrenching himself away from a too narrow "inner life", he secured for himself a knowledge of nature and of man, as well as of himself; knowledge of the complex moral relations of society as well as of his own feelings. He found a philosophy, a practical wisdom, a way of living, which was not dogmatic or codified, but on the other hand was not inconsistent, or unstable, or straggling and diffuse. But he secured it as a personal achievement curiously outside society and the general drift of ideas amongst contemporaries and immediate successors. This possibly accounts in part for his notorious Olympian isolation and for his remoteness in our own time, for our difficulty in finding live nerves in our relationship to his work. On the one hand his early poetry appears too simple to command intimacy from readers who have assimilated the elaborate and cunning introversion of later poets, so much more seductive, from Novalis to Rilke; on the other hand we do not find ourselves altogether at ease in the translucent atmosphere of the middle and later works, which with their moral certainty and tranquillity, and their remarkable range of poetic expression, are too triumphant for our helplessness. If it is true that we are shut off from intimacy, without the impulse to reach for Goethe's poems not as students of poetry but as people seeking the vision that gives meaning to our circumstances, we can perhaps approach the Olympian by affecting the Olympian attitude. We can as historians try to recapture the freshness and splendour of Goethe's early poetry in relation to the new romantic spirit moving in Europe at that time; and then detach ourselves, as Goethe did, from the romantic tradition and try to appreciate his middle and later work as the record of a mind that expanded and deepened as it added to its romanticism a more adequate view of reality.

The first poems to show Goethe's exceptional genius were the

lyrics he wrote in his late teens, when he was a student at Leipzig. They are a queer mixture of adolescent day-dreaming, partly disguised in anacreontic conventions, and of a sympathetic perception, new in its delicacy, of nature:

Schwester von dem ersten Licht,
Bild der Zärtlichkeit in Trauer!
Nebel schwimmt mit Silberschauer
Um dein reizendes Gesicht;
Deines leisen Fusses Lauf
Weckt aus tagverschlossnen Höhlen
Traurig abgeschiedne Seelen,
Mich und nächt'ge Vögel auf.

Forschend übersieht dein Blick
Eine grossgemessne Weite.
Hebe mich an deine Seite!
Gib der Schwärmerei dies Glück;
Und in wollustvoller Ruh
Säh' der weitverschlagne Ritter
Durch das gläserne Gegitter
Seines Mädchens Nächten zu.

Des Beschauens holdes Glück
Mildert solcher Ferne Qualen,
Und ich sammle seine Strahlen
Und ich schärfe meinen Blick;
Hell und heller wird es schon
Um die unverhüllten Glieder,
Und nun zieht sie mich hernieder,
Wie dich einst Endymion.

An Luna.

In the fifties and sixties a number of mild scholar-poets cultivated, as they burned the midnight oil, a poetry of pedantic voluptuousness in which everything—sentiment, love, images, properties—was conventional. In Goethe's verses the love motive is ambiguous; it might be conventional, but it might also be genuine. Or it is a conventional motive brought to life by the generalized love-desire of a young man, a genuine passion expressing

itself in a trite situation. Most remarkable, however, are the language and perceptions of the first stanza. The moon is part of the conventional situation of the poem; but the manner in which the whole moonlit landscape is evoked is remote from the poetic conventions of the time. A power of sensuous perception, and also a delicate, sympathetic linking of the mind and the moon-landscape, make these verses far more important than the poem as a whole. They are signs both of a new sensibility in poetry and of an astounding genius.

The new movement of the early seventies, led by Herder and Goethe, was a revolt against all conventions in literature and culture; the verses we have just been discussing, breaking the framework of a conventional poem, are symbolic of what now happened as Herder's prose and Goethe's poetry burst into the literature of the day. The revolt sprang essentially from antipathy to the rationalist spirit and the stuffier aspects of enlightenment morality, and from sympathy with every movement of a living nature that revealed its being in the physical universe or in the emotions of the heart. Herder had command of all the philosophical ideas and knowledge with which beliefs could be supported and new feelings about poetry made articulate; he also had at his disposal a glowing, enthusiastic, vivid language and a fine sense for translation; so that, without being a poet himself, he became the fountain-head of a poetic renaissance. It was Goethe who sang what Herder could only say.

The poems he wrote in the next decade or so, including *Mailied, Willkommen und Abschied, Auf dem See, Herbstgefühl, Heidenröslein, Wandrers Nachtlieder, An den Mond, Ganymed, Prometheus*, and many others, are amongst his most famous. All anthology pieces, they have remained the most popular, and in historical retrospect they are surrounded by the glamour of their circumstances. The greatest poet of Germany produced them in all the matutinal splendour of awakening genius, and they mark the initiation of a period that was to be one of sustained brilliance for German poetic literature. They show a variety of theme and feeling, but there are few that cannot be related to the central experience, the tumultuous liberation of the spirit through a new vision of nature.

They sprang from a great turbulence of feeling. The types of poetry Goethe and Herder admired at the time were anything that was sublime, like Pindar, the poetry of the Bible, and Ossian; the work of the most "original" genius of all, Shakespeare, a demiurge; all primitive poetry, sprung from minds saturated with the pristine grandeur of nature and innocent of human corruption; and folk-poetry, as the natural, characteristic product of a folk-imagination. These enthusiasms of Goethe are commonplaces of literary history; yet the poems he actually wrote, with the exception of a few ballads and lyrics like *Der König in Thule* and *Heidenröslein*, have no resemblance to the admired examples. At the most there are remote echoes of Biblical diction or vague reminiscences of Pindaric inspiration. The *Sturm und Drang* writers held, no doubt, that the nearer you come to a naturally inspired utterance, something impersonal and oracular, the more it is poetry; and it is this quality that they saw, or chose to emphasize, in the types of poetry they revered. Goethe's own poems of this period are not oracles of nature, nor are they impersonal, and their song-like quality is quite different from that of folk-song. Neither are any of them genuine philosophic pieces, though *Mahomets Gesang* comes nearest to being a successful fusion of symbol and philosophical idea. Goethe's poems have their origin clearly in a psychological turmoil, the chief mark of which is a quite new sense of dynamic vitality. This sense is not without a certain magnificence, but it also suffers exaggeration. Its magnificence lies in the exuberant animation with which it sees nature, a physical world in constant growth and movement, full of the burstings and swellings and ripenings of organic life; but all of this seen for the sake of what cannot be seen, for the sake of a divine ecstasy immanent in life. An extreme, the point of mysticism, is reached in the religious, aspiring mood of *Ganymed*, in the yielding to the greater-than-self. But the world of nature is matched also by a corresponding internal world of genius, love, and creative power, no less nature, and no less to be exalted. On this side an extreme is reached in self-assertion, for which Goethe used the rebellious-titan motive of Prometheus. *Ganymed* and *Prometheus* are important poems because they crystallize at extreme points Goethe's possible attitudes

at this time; they are easy to *place* in the scheme of his nature-beliefs, and they indicate a framework within which the other poems move. They also show the degree of agitation there is in Goethe's *Sturm und Drang* condition; they are not perfect poems but rather perfect signs of the impossibility for such a turbulent mental condition ever to become adequately articulate.

More characteristic than what we perceive in these extremes is the subtle intertwining of the outer world of nature and the inner world of mind in the poetic process. We do not simply get a picture of nature, because a mind moving out into nature and back into itself is too clearly apparent. We are not dealing only with subjective moods, because the poetry breathes homage to nature, revealing its appearances and revering its powers:

Füllest wieder Busch und Tal
Still mit Nebelglanz,
Lösest endlich auch einmal
Meine Seele ganz. . . .

An den Mond

Der Mond von einem Wolkenhügel
Sah kläglich aus dem Duft hervor,
Die Winde schwangen leise Flügel,
Umsausten schauerlich mein Ohr;
Die Nacht schuf tausend Ungeheuer;
Doch frisch und fröhlich war mein Mut:
In meinen Adern welches Feuer!
In meinem Herzen welche Glut! . . .

Willkommen und Abschied

Über allen Gipfeln
Ist Ruh,
In allen Wipfeln
Spürest du
Kaum einen Hauch;
Die Vögelein schweigen im Walde.
Warte nur, balde
Ruhest du auch.

Wandrers Nachtlied

In passages such as these the picture of nature is a form of imagery to be interpreted psychologically, whilst on the other hand the poet's states of mind can be read as phases of nature. Another example is the dithyrambic interfusion of the themes of love and nature that we find in *Mailied*, or *Herbstgefühl*, where the view of nature offers an indirect erotic symbolism, whilst on the other hand the love-feeling spiritualizes the merely organic processes of nature. All these poems, beautiful, sensitive, exquisite in their rhythmical evocations, emerge in the excitement of a mind which is not only in constant and subtle motion, and receptive for the impulses from a living, a dreaming, a magical nature, but is also instinct with tenderness and disposed to a manifold love.

The love-poems represent for Europe as well as for Germany a most original treatment of the erotic theme. It is a love-poetry with a complete lack of sophistication; the ecstatic discipleship of nature expresses itself here in the simplest naturalism. The innocence and virtue of spontaneous passion are ideal enough; the cultured felicities and philosophical subtleties that had adorned the great love-poetry of the past, in Petrarch, Ronsard, Spenser, Shakespeare, Donne, are obliterated in a faithful capturing of the simplest turns of impulse for their own sake:

Herz, mein Herz, was soll das geben?
Was bedränget dich so sehr?
Welch ein fremdes neues Leben!
Ich erkenne dich nicht mehr.
Weg ist alles, was du liebtest,
Weg warum du dich betrübtest,
Weg dein Fleiss und deine Ruh—
Ach wie kamst du nur dazu!

Fesselt dich die Jugendblüte,
Diese liebliche Gestalt,
Dieser Blick voll Treu und Güte,
Mit unendlicher Gewalt?
Will ich rasch mich ihr entziehen,
Mich ermannen, ihr entfliehen,
Führet mich im Augenblick
Ach mein Weg zu ihr zurück.

Und an diesem Zauberfädchen,
Das sich nicht zerreissen lässt,
Hält das liebe lose Mädchen
Mich so wider Willen fest;
Muss in ihrem Zauberkreise
Leben nun auf ihre Weise.
Die Verändrung ach wie gross!
Liebe! Liebe! lass mich los!

Neue Liebe neues Leben

O Lieb', o Liebe!
So golden schön,
Wie Morgenwolken
Auf jenen Höhn!

Du segnest herrlich
Das frische Feld,
Im Blütendampfe
Die volle Welt.

O Mädchen, Mädchen,
Wie lieb' ich dich!
Wie blickt dein Auge!
Wie liebst du mich!

So liebt die Lerche
Gesang und Luft
Und Morgenblumen
Den Himmelsduft,

Wie ich dich liebe
Mit warmem Blut,
Die du mir Jugend
Und Freud' und Mut

Zu neuen Liedern
Und Tänzen gibst.
Sei ewig glücklich,
Wie du mich liebst!

Mailied

It is as though the imagination were trying to renounce all its rights in favour of one desire: to delineate with the closest intimacy a psychology of love that is a physiology of nature. Goethe has in these poems achieved a spontaneity, an immediate apprehension of natural emotion and impulse, which makes them a remarkable lyric performance.

Goethe's Strassburg, Frankfurt, and early Weimar lyrics are a quite original creation; they are a different type of poetry from any Goethe and Herder admired in common, and the "influence" of which can only be understood as a stimulus of the most general kind. They are distinguished by their simplicity, their free impulsive movement, and a musical quality that resides indefinably in their *Innigkeit* as much as in their melody and rhythm. Above all Goethe showed at this early stage a complete mastery of the artless lyric. Many of his most famous and bewitching poems are of this kind; so are a number of ballads like *Der Fischer*, or *Erlkönig*, which are really lyrics in ballad disguise. And he kept this mastery, and the taste for this kind of poem, throughout his life, writing them at times when his predominant style was very different. The songs of Mignon and the Harper in *Wilhelm Meister*, the *Schäfers Klagelied* of 1802, and the tone of many poems of the *West-östlicher Divan* are examples from different periods.

Goethe cultivated the natural man throughout his life, and since his genius contained a powerful strain of the introspective, his works constitute a dossier for a "natural history" of his mind and person. One, however, that is also representative; his work, however exceptional, reflects in a unique way the natural evolution of the normal mind and its interests from youth to age. Goethe's poems do not merely fall into "periods"; part of their essential significance for a critical estimate of the whole is that they *record* periods, that is, typical psychological stages. Thus the characteristic exuberance of Goethe's *Sturm und Drang* is followed by a characteristic tranquillizing process. A series of famous poems—*Gesang der Geister über den Wassern, Grenzen der Menschheit, Das Göttliche*—show the change. They reflect a certain spiritual sensitiveness, a vague kind of moral aspiration, an awakening to something that is not yet philosophy—it is far too confused for

that—but touches philosophical sentiment; and it is all expressed in beautiful rhythms which keep the freedom of earlier poems but are adapted to a tender and meditative movement, as of the young mind freeing itself from over-pressing passions and seeking a broader and chastening knowledge.

The keynote of Goethe's middle period, which opens in the middle eighties, when he was thirty-five or thirty-six, is a detached, objective way of seeing things which does not, as is commonly implied, replace, but is superimposed upon, his introversion, rather obviously at first, later in a more veiled form. The introspective imagination that produced *Werther* is recognizable in *Torquato Tasso;* but whereas the significance of the novel derives from Werther himself, that of the play lies in much more than Tasso. The world outside Tasso, the forces ranged against him, the profound criticism of his shortcomings, represent something that was growing and emerging in Goethe at this time; his view of life was expanding, his philosophical outlook deepening, his moral sense becoming firmer and acquiring more perspective.

A consequence is that lyric writing takes second place to other kinds. These years of transition produced relatively few poems. Three plays, *Egmont*, *Iphigenie auf Tauris*, and *Torquato Tasso*, are the weighty documents of the change both by their themes and by their dramatic form. The tendency established itself permanently; and if Goethe had previously shown himself a lyric genius of verve and power, he now developed into a great poet in the wider and more difficult sense. In succeeding years his poetry marks a progressive discovery of his own range. His vision, previously self-centred, begins to embrace a greater variety of human character and outlook, and a vast diversity of knowledge and interests.

Corresponding changes creep into his more properly lyric poems, the inspiration springing still, it is true, from feeling, but a feeling with which more and more an enthusiasm for ideas has intermingled; or rather one should perhaps say that Goethe has added to his natural powers of feeling a culture of the emotional life in which emotion is refined by philosophy and by the will to

see the world as object. The poetry Goethe now wrote has often been looked on as evidence of a failure in power, since it is so different from the vivacity and tumultuous life of the earlier lyrics. But although it has little of the direct "my tears flowed", "my heart leapt", "come, peace, to my heart", it proceeds from emotional wells quite as deep, from a mind much deeper, and a poetic power more stable and more elaborate. The lyric poems Goethe wrote before his Italian journey indicate a poet who would rank with Brentano or Mörike, first-class poets of limited range. But the addition of the *Römische Elegien, Der neue Pausias und sein Blumenmädchen, Euphrosyne, Die Metamorphose der Pflanzen*, the narrative idyll *Hermann und Dorothea*, and so on, varied in themselves and quite different from what had preceded them, reveals a poet of quite extraordinary powers even within the lyric field alone.

This poetry, in which love is a predominant theme, shows its maturity and originality in an alliance between a certain sophistication and an eye that never loses its innocence when it has nature under view. The sophistication is partly urbane, partly philosophical; the study of science, of art and culture, contributes to it, and so do the sagacities of a man of the world. It appears in the atmosphere of classical Rome in the *Roman Elegies;* in the delicious awareness of intellectual pleasures in love, and of erotic pleasures in intellectual interests; in a conversational dalliance and wit. The innocence, on the other hand, lies in the imagination which gave Goethe a plastic vision of nature and man. His poetry in consequence now becomes a peculiarly subtle form of philosophic vision, in which the passion of life is interfused with the passion of *knowing* life; and the explicit sign of this interfusion is the way Goethe has of seeking the typical form, the sensuous image in which the general and the particular, the concrete and the ideal, are indistinguishable. Goethe's theory of style at this period relies on his belief that natural forms, when divested of everything accidental or abnormal, are both true and beautiful, and the proper subject of art and poetry. The condition of success in this poetic ideal, which to-day seems somewhat unexciting but is in fact one of the most exacting of all stylizations, is absolute

tranquillity in the observation and absolute certainty in the touch. Goethe's mastery enables him to present men and emotions in these poems with such natural truth, simplicity, and purity that we are startled at the beauty of things which might have seemed too ordinary to mention.

If the early poems were exclamatory, these are pictures; but the emotion is equally profound, the poetic inspiration quite as compulsive and eruptive, though served now by an art conscious of how much expressive power can be achieved by strict composition. The poetic effect is secured partly by ways that are devious, and to which other forms contribute. It might be the plastic arts, for Goethe constantly evokes in his elegies scenes in which characters are grouped pictorially. Again the scenes themselves often draw on narrative or border on the dramatic, and a favourite feature is the device of working retrospectively from a given scene, as in *Der neue Pausias und sein Blumenmädchen*, or *Alexis und Dora*, where the past love-story is elicited through dialogue. It is a fruitful method from the formal point of view, securing concentration and economy; but it is also skilfully used to put the pressure of past events and feelings on to the present, enhancing the emotion which gives rise to the poem but which seems at first to be evaded.

Not the least beauty of these poems, however, is the light that surrounds them, a light that has the brilliance, height, and serenity of the classical sky Goethe had aspired to know and under which the seal was set on his maturity. This light lit up the world of nature and the world of antiquity; and, flowing round him with a creative influence, it passed from being a condition by which he saw into being a quality of his mind. He had got to know men during years spent in government and administration; he knew women because he loved them; he was studying science, and with more penetration than many professionals; he was in daily contact with art and historical culture, in Greece, Rome, and modern Europe; and it is remarkable now to observe how all these things interact in his luminous and fecund mind, are present in his personality, and how an all-embracing imagination brings them to a fine awareness. The fruits are in these poems, images of

the world in himself and of himself in the world. It is not only that various things are brought obviously into association, as in the *Roman Elegies*, where the pleasures and drama of love, classical devotions, sculpture, myths, the joy of the Roman air and scene, are interwoven to form a picture of himself in Rome; but rather that qualities of mind and outlook, beliefs, ideas, without being explicitly expressed, are implicit in the growth and character of each of these poems. The aesthetic pleasure and intellectual self-possession of the *Roman Elegies* are linked with the scientific idea of the *Metamorphose der Pflanzen*. The passion of the latter poem, taking its origin in a profound piety and issuing in an intellectual excitement, reflects a humanity which is essentially that of the serene *Hermann und Dorothea*. They are all linked in this intricate way and form a coherent group.

Goethe handled the classical prosody in accordance with the spirit of his matured vision. Hexameters and distichs do not of themselves constitute classicism; they can be used to express emotions varying greatly in intensity and kind. Klopstock's classical metres convey an enthusiasm which was always sublime in intention and often portentous in effect. Hölderlin used them for a hymnic inspiration as far removed from the Goethean *Roman Elegies* as it is possible to imagine. The characteristic mark of Goethe's hexameters and distichs is a light and easy movement which derives from the fluency and pace of epic narrative and dialogue. But the verse is also impregnated, especially in the *Roman Elegies*, with the rhythms of an urbane mind, of conversation and wit moving unhampered, capriciously and gracefully, amidst cultivated delights. The distich, however, is a well-defined form, and in consequence it makes for shapeliness. Goethe uses the restraint it can exercise to enhance the stylization which, as we have seen, is of the very essence of his poetry at this time.

I have suggested that there is a certain element of "philosophy" present in all these poems of the post-Italian-journey period, though none of them, except possibly *Die Metamorphose der Pflanzen*, could be classified as a "philosophical poem". This is viewing the matter broadly; but it is fitting to do so, because the continuity between the middle and later periods is better felt.

Goethe became more and more of a philosopher as he grew older, and he wrote a great quantity of gnomic and epigrammatic verse, the *Venetian Epigrams*, the *Zahme Xenien*, the sections of the collected poems entitled *Sprichwörtlich*, *Epigrammatisch*, "*Gott, Gemüt und Welt*", and other groups. He also wrote a number of poems, like *Dauer im Wechsel* and some of the *Divan* poems, which are a plain statement of his philosophical beliefs. But although general ideas are prominent in all this writing, it would be hazardous to maintain that Goethe had become less of a poet.

His gnomic verse has not to be read and judged only as a certain sum of moral observations, set down with epigrammatic vividness and valuable by their truth and apt expression. Apart from their sheer bulk, which is important in itself, they have to be seen in relation to the general functioning of Goethe's poetic faculty and the fact of poetry-writing as a normal habit of his mind. The spirit of Goethe's aphoristic verse is always that of discovering the idea as well as stating it. Taken in the mass, and remembering, too, that many epigrams are scattered throughout the novels and plays, they are the work of an imagination that is always in flight. The subject-matter, the "lessons" to be drawn from observing life, are important; the truths formulated, sometimes incisively, sometimes jocosely, are valid; and Goethe's facility in turning a phrase, in rhyme, in varied metre, in appropriate images, produces endless entertaining effects. Moreover, he covers sufficient ground, his insight is sustained over a wide enough area, to be impressive. This is the more necessary since his observations concern for the most part the "universal" aspects of human nature. He forgoes the advantage that the French moralists of the seventeenth century gained by deriving old truths anew from a particular social setting, so that the particular and the general are always interacting. In his case the occasional platitude or dulness is compensated by his enormous fertility. For whatever the validity of his aphorisms from the point of view of "truth", they are all the offshoots of a mind in ceaseless activity; and this glowing mind is served by an imagination which produced spontaneously and unflaggingly, in language and image, the signs of the mind's act of experiencing. If Goethe's

aphoristic writing amounted to numerous folios of distilled truth, presented to frail, dim-sighted humans, he would be something of a monster, which is not the case. His verses are the visible sign of his faculties moving with the movement of life; not in selected, set pieces, in the sense in which this might apply to any poetry, but in the continuous stream of apprehension and idea. The famous comment that Goethe made on his work applies here just as much as to his most personal lyrics, or to characters in his novels and dramas who are disguises of himself:

"Und so begann diejenige Richtung, von der ich mein ganzes Leben über nicht abweichen konnte, nämlich dasjenige, was mich erfreute oder quälte, oder sonst beschäftigte, in ein Bild, ein Gedicht zu verwandeln und darüber mit mir selbst abzuschliessen, um sowohl meine Begriffe von den aüsseren Dingen zu berichtigen, als mich im Innern deshalb zu beruhigen. Die Gabe hierzu war wohl niemand nötiger als mir, den seine Natur immerfort aus einem Extreme in das andere warf. Alles, was daher von mir bekannt geworden, sind nur Bruchstücke einer grossen Konfession, welche vollständig zu machen dieses Büchlein ein gewagter Versuch ist." (In this way a habit started from which I have throughout my life been unable to desist; whatever delighted, or disturbed me, or otherwise engaged my interest, I converted into a picture or a poem, thus always reckoning out where I stood, in order both to correct my conceptions of external objects and to calm my inward thoughts. No one needed this gift so much as I, it being my nature to swing from one extreme to the other. All the things, therefore, that have appeared from my pen are but fragments of a great confession, to complete which is the bold purpose of this little book.)—*Dichtung und Wahrheit*, Part II, Book 7.

His gnomic verses, in their incessant flow, in their accumulation, in their relationship to the epigrams in his other works, in their ubiquity, their interconnection with all the forms of his imagination, are part of this confession. And hence, though they encase truths of philosophy, which may be used in detachment, they reflect still more a way of philosophizing, a continuous meeting of mind and experience, of nature and words.

The only other modern author who carried as much moral knowledge and psychological insight as Goethe was Shakespeare, who derived nerve and vividness, and the quality in moral comment which makes it a mental excitement, from his picture of life in dramatic commotion. Goethe derives *his* vividness from the profoundly romantic sense of the soul in touch with universal life throbbing in nature and man. Into his "philosophical" poetry he carried the sensibility that had gained so much from Herder in the early Strassburg days. On the surface is a knowledge that is stable and tranquil; but underneath is the pulse of the imagination that once responded to the flowing passion of the natural scene and now projects an image of its own development and expansion in a varied commentary on the life to which it belongs. Goethe's "wisdom" consisted largely in his instinctive intimacy with this process of life; in his capacity for living amongst living things with the spontaneous joy of all vitality, his capacity for running with nature and letting nature run with him, and the power he derives from this to maintain in equipoise his knowledge of being and his sense of process. Here lie the roots, moreover, of his tolerance, remarkable not only by its breadth but by its quality of innocence; it issues from the mind with the simplicity and chastity of the natural world that Goethe observes and, observing, accepts.

Some of these aphoristic verses were produced in groups, like the *Zahme Xenien*, in relatively short stretches of time. But much falls outside groups, and even these belong to very different periods of his life. He was always writing them, and this habit of continuous comment in verse gives a clear indication of the place that poetry had in his life. Fertility enters into it, but not the fertility that appears in the rapid completion of set pieces. Goethe in no way confined himself to canalizing his poetry in "poems". The peculiarity of his case seems rather to be that his imagination, and his impulse to expression, operated as the main instrument of his consciousness; so that to be continually finding words for his states of feeling, idea, thought, scientific observation, emotion, was the *normal* condition of his being alive. Two of his most distinguishing characteristics, spontaneous quality and prolific

quantity, are the result. Connected with it is the method of accretion by which many of his longer works proceeded slowly to their completion. They grew by a series of inspirations. In other cases works sketched were abandoned, the most notable being the plans for a number of dramas. Goethe's dilatoriness in composition was not the application of the craftsman polishing and refining his form; it was that of a poet who desired to force nothing, but waited on a subconscious maturing of his poetic ideas. This was carried to the point of being careless as to whether they matured or not; and it involves also a certain failure to respond to the architecture of the larger forms. The dictum about his works as "fragments of a great confession" is usually interpreted with an emphasis on the word "confession", which seems most natural in the context. But the word "fragments" has its subterranean meanings, for the running confession, as we have analysed it, involves beginnings and endings conterminous only with his starting to write and his death; so that a profound tendency in all his writing was in fact towards the fragment as something that is merely an interrupted section of a continuous whole.

At the same time Goethe had a remarkable sense of formal values, which he developed through study of classical poetry and art amidst the landscape, climate, and culture of a classical country. One is in consequence aware of conflicting forces in his work. There is an odd contrast, for instance, between his immense technical resources and a very frequent unevenness of quality, which can be most disturbing in poems that are otherwise important, as in the careless rhyming of the final lines of *Faust II*, or in some lines of the famous *Urworte*. Goethe studied techniques and forms most deliberately at certain periods. But he had virtuosity without the virtuoso's temperament; he could be the poet with the most conscious control of his means, without becoming thereby an example of that *type* of poet. Finally, the first law of his manner was, without doubt, the natural lyric outburst. In accordance with it he could write poems whose perfection resides in their spontaneity, like the Strassburg lyrics. But he could also produce pieces like *Euphrosyne*, whose perfection lies in their art. Yet again he could write poems, like *Vollmondnacht*,

in which both spontaneity and artistry seem to function more intensely than usual, and at the same time harmoniously.

An outstanding feature of Goethe's later poetic manner (that is, of the period that dates from about the time of Schiller's death, when Goethe was nearly fifty-six) is the addiction to allegory, which is consonant with the didactic tendency to start from ideas and find apt illustrations. But that in itself would not do as a summing-up of his later style. Goethe's poetry at this time astonishes most of all by the variety of expression that is at his disposal. He had an enormous store of learning and ideas; his energy was undiminished; his poetic inspiration was still lively enough to make a reputation in itself; and he had been practising the art for some fifty years, in a variety of dramatic, narrative, and lyric forms. He could now tap the resources of language or metre, symbol or allegory, strict or free composition, the lyric tone or the lucid statement, dialogue or meditation, where he wanted; every variation of form and style was available, and his execution made it appear artless, as though it was the old spontaneous flow of his Strassburg days. And indeed it was spontaneous; the new spontaneity of a great technical command, displaying all the power that derives from the habit of expression, indulged in on an exceptional scale.

This power consists not in being able to repeat a form previously used, as a matter of superficial virtuosity, but in having at his disposal the experience in expression on which he could draw for finding new expression. He became, for instance, at this period, a subtle master of the philosophical lyric, of which he produced many examples, not all conforming to a single pattern, but all containing a statement of thought suffused with lyric emotion. In these poems Goethe has gone a stage further than in the elegies of his middle period, for he has passed from images with a philosophic implication to ideas explicitly stated; but he seems to have gone back to his first period for the quality of song with which he invests the poems. The later thought is united with the felt beliefs of the first period, for both have nature as their object; and the passion and piety of romantic feeling for nature joins with the affirmation of knowledge *about* it, a knowledge founded

in science and philosophy. In this way the degree of music in the early pieces, of which perhaps the most beautiful was *An den Mond*, has been recaptured in a totally unexpected way and place, allied with logically stated philosophy. There are differences. In some of the poems, like *Dauer im Wechsel*, or *Eins und Alles*, Goethe comes nearer to systematizing his thought than he did anywhere else, and the style is only sufficiently rhythmical and serious, borrowing hints of incantation, to soften the didacticism with some element of fervour. But in *Wiederfinden*, or *Selige Sehnsucht*, or even in the quatrain *Wär nicht das Auge sonnenhaft*, the musicalization is more complete; they contain thought which could be fitted rationally into the philosophy of the other poems, but the rationality is subordinate to their mysterious, and jubilant, celebration of life and its immanent divinity.

His sovereign powers at this period can be illustrated, too, by his remarkable handling of symbols. A favourite conception of his, constantly referred to in his poetry and supported by his scientific theory of metamorphosis, was that all things are signs and images, the metaphorical surface of time and change. It is from this conception that his symbolism is nurtured; and it manifests itself not only in a choice of this or that symbol but also in a tendency to base a poem on a single image which has from inception the virtue of becoming symbolical. An example of what I mean is *Gefunden*:

Ich ging im Walde
So für mich hin,
Und nichts zu suchen
Das war mein Sinn.

Im Schatten sah ich
Ein Blümchen stehn,
Wie Sterne leuchtend,
Wie Äuglein schön.

Ich wollt' es brechen,
Da sagt' es fein:
'Soll ich zum Welken
Gebrochen sein?'

Ich grub's mit allen
Den Würzlein aus,
Zum Garten trug ich's
Am hübschen Haus.

Und pflanzt' es wieder
Am stillen Ort;
Nun zweigt es immer
Und blüht so fort.

If interpretation is based on the link with Christiane Vulpius, Goethe's mistress, and afterwards his wife, the image will be taken as an indirect way of expressing a deep and tender love. The ambit of the poem's meanings is more extensive, however, if it is allowed them; it may be that they radiate from Goethe and Christiane, but they do radiate. The love of which it speaks can be more than personal; the life that is symbolically preserved more than that of one person. Goethe, with a poetic deliberation in which the gravity of his late experience shines through the limpid *naïveté* of the treatment, has simply given an impersonal image; it is clear and defined, and it is also ambiguous, in the sense that it has many possible references. The latter are as wide as the humanity of the poem is profound. This symbolism and transparency have entered into many love-poems, which become at once intense and wonderfully tranquil; they are poems of passion and at the same time enunciate an evaluation of the passion for the mind contemplating life. The *Vollmondnacht* is a love-poem, but so simplified in its economy, so unerring in its choice of situation and motives, and so deliberate in its oblique method, that it refuses to be confined to one love or one event or one plane of feeling; instead it is amplified by its own symbolical tendency into a statement about love which belongs both to lyric and to philosophic vision. *Dem aufgehenden Vollmonde*, or *Suleika spricht*, or *Gingo Biloba*, are other examples, the latter using the most delicate of balances for its botanical symbol and its passionate feeling.

A divine levity flourishes in the conjunction between Goethe's philosophic culture, his humanity, and the facility of his poetic

inspiration. It is this quality which gives the *West-östlicher Divan* its unique flavour, but it is not restricted to that work. Echoes of it on a lower plane are to be heard in many of his *Gesellige Lieder;* in *Generalbeichte*, for instance, where the tone, a mingling of sincere beliefs and gay application of them, is most exactly calculated.

I have tried to indicate very briefly a few stages in the development of Goethe's poetic style and some of the virtues of each phase. To simplify thus, whilst it is the only way of gaining some general view, forces one to omissions which become too numerous not to be disquieting. There are the ballads, for instance, which, read as a series, are in themselves a brilliant achievement, illustrating every stage that we have considered. There is the love-poem *Warum gabst du uns die tiefen Blicke*, sent with a letter to Charlotte von Stein and never published by Goethe himself. There is the late *Marienbader Elegie*, recording an old man's passion and grief for passion. There are poems of homage to persons, of which the outstanding one is the *Epilog zu Schillers Glocke*, showing Goethe in the capacity of public poet and representative voice. He was a poet so fertile and of such varied interests, of tenacious vitality and formidable stamina, the long years of his life heaping up thoughts, poems, experiments, plans, into a prodigious mass, that there is no talismanic word that would sum up the character of his work. Except the one that begs the question: that he was many things in turn. He had a real capacity to be them, however. In the forms he essayed he produced masterpieces, with the prominent exception of the sonnet. He created in Germany the romantic conception of the lyric as an overflow of personal feeling. He is peculiarly interesting as a love-poet because for the conventions of love-poetry he substituted simple truth to himself, singing not only love, but love as part of his total self at any given moment, so that the erotic theme is in counterpoint with the themes that occupied his mind, whether it was nature, or classical Rome, or oriental poetry and philosophy. The art-form of the ballad was introduced by Bürger, but Goethe carried it immediately to the limits of its development,

giving it both a perfection and a variety that no one after him has been able to touch, though many have tried. His classical elegies were rivalled by those of Hölderlin, but the different inspiration makes it impossible to put either above the other. In aphoristic verse he has no competitor. A number of poets from Hölderlin to Rilke have written "philosophical" poems in which they have probed thought possibly as deep as that of Goethe; but they have not always succeeded in evading the snares that await the enthusiastic or the solemn prophet. No one has combined piety with clarity, sanity with jubilation and music, as Goethe did so simply and naturally in his late philosophic lyrics. He is the great exemplar of a humanity that is possessed of all its faculties through the imagination and is content to be poised not higher, and not lower, than its own best effort.

GOETHE
AS NOVELIST

by E. L. Stahl

AMONG the qualities of Goethe which entitle us to call him a representative European writer, not the least notable is his versatility. In one respect his eminence is unrivalled. No other dramatist of the same stature is equally great as a novelist. There are many writers who rival him in either domain. Goethe is unique because his contribution to both genres of literature is of a distinctive order.

The reason why novelists do not usually excel as dramatists is not far to seek. While there are many instances of a writer's ability to view life both subjectively and objectively and to emphasize the inward as well as the outward manifestations of reality, a capacity for regarding the world objectively in two different ways appears to be exceptional. The differences between the novelist's descriptive presentation of reality and the dramatist's direct portrayal are too great to be compatible in the majority of writers.

It is not surprising, therefore, that many critics have found Goethe's plays lacking in those elements of conflict and characterization which are adjudged essential in a drama, and that others consider his novels deficient in plot and invention, in the art of

narration. Thus it is perhaps necessary to modify the statement that Goethe's unique contribution to literature lay in his ability to combine the dramatist's approach to life with that of the novelist. He was only able to perform this task, to practise apparently divergent modes of literary composition, by modifying both in the drama and in the novel some of their distinctive qualities.

This does not mean, however, that Goethe was not himself aware of the essential differences between these literary genres. In Book V, Chapter 7, of *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* he expresses the view that the drama deals with characters and actions, the novel with sentiments and events. The tragic hero is an active person, the hero of a novel should remain passive. The novelist may make use of coincidences, but only the dramatist can effectively introduce fate into his plot:

"Im Roman sollen vorzüglich Gesinnungen und Begebenheiten vorgestellt werden; im Drama Charaktere und Taten .... Der Romanenheld muss leidend, wenigstens nicht im hohen Grade wirkend sein; von dem dramatischen verlangt man Wirkung und Tat.... So vereinigte man sich auch darüber, dass man dem Zufall im Roman gar wohl sein Spiel erlauben könne; dass er aber immer durch die Gesinnungen der Personen gelenkt und geleitet werden müsse; dass hingegen das Schicksal, das die Menschen, ohne ihr Zutun, durch unzusammenhängende äussere Umstände zu einer unvorhergesehenen Katastrophe hindrängt, nur im Drama statthabe."

In general, the validity of these remarks is unquestionable. Yet a comparison between them and the views of recent writers on the novel, such as Henry James and E. M. Forster, will show that Goethe's theory suffers from many limitations. The nineteenth and twentieth centuries produced greater advances in the novel than in any other field of literature. The material on which Goethe based his theory derived almost entirely from the work of English writers of the eighteenth century, so that his views do not represent all the potentialities of the genre as they are now conceived. If we remember the work of Flaubert, Tolstoy, Dostoevsky and Thomas Hardy, we cannot unreservedly accept

Goethe's opinion that the realm of tragic fate lies beyond the field of the novelist's art. In making this statement he relied too much on the practice of the English novelists in whose work the "life and opinions" of a chosen character formed the principal content. Ultimately Goethe's limitation as a theorist of the novel consists in his tendency to consider this form largely as a mirror of social life.

It will be seen, however, that in the practical sphere he contributed to the development of a profounder kind of novel which transcends the restrictions prescribed in his theory. It is true that his own work did not exhaust the possibilities which even in his day were beginning to be realized in this genre. Whereas Wieland's novels continued the tradition inaugurated in the seventeenth century and prepared the way for the growth of the historical novel in the nineteenth century, Goethe took no interest in this particular species of fiction. Yet in each of his three novels *Werther*, *Wilhelm Meister* and *Die Wahlverwandtschaften*, he broke new ground and in each instance he presented a different theme in a characteristically original manner. From the technical point of view as well as in their content his novels represent widely differing experiments in the craft of fiction. Goethe's progress as a novelist may be discerned when we consider the central problem which he treats in each of these works, and contrast them with one another as expositions of human life and as documents revealing the changing no less than the permanent interests of their author. In assessing them our attention must shift from Goethe's preoccupation with the character of the hero in his first novel to an observation of the balance between the hero and society in his second novel, and finally, in his third work, our attention is centred not on a single character or on the contacts between this character and external reality, but on four figures who form a compact group and whose fortunes are of universal rather than purely social significance.

In the account which Goethe gives of *Werther* in Book 13 of *Dichtung und Wahrheit*, he clearly shows that his first novel was a compound of personal and impersonal elements and that he strove to fuse the variegated material on which it is based into

a "poetic unity", to transmute "reality" into "poetry". He recalls how his own friends and the reading public at large sought a didactic purpose behind the work, or else condemned it as immoral. But, he replies, an artistic representation is never didactic: "Die wahre Darstellung aber hat keinen (didaktischen Zweck)". Indeed, although in his short preface to *Werther* Goethe, as the "editor" of Werther's papers, calls upon the reader to pity and admire his hero, it is manifestly a special kind of reaction that he aimed to arouse. Both the admiration and the sympathy that we are asked to expend on Werther are emotions excited by a pathological case, by a man who is doomed to destruction even before we make his acquaintance. In his parody of the work, says Goethe, Nicolai failed to see that the canker was destroying Werther in his youth, that his "Jugendblüte schon von vornherein als vom tödlichen Wurm gestochen erscheine", and he gives a masterly analysis of the mentality which we find in Werther.

Goethe points out that misanthropy is the result of an inability to take a reasonable interest in the ever recurring events of life and nature: "Alles Behagen am Leben ist auf eine regelmässige Wiederkehr der äusseren Dinge gegründet . . . wälzt sich aber die Verschiedenheit dieser Erscheinungen vor uns auf und nieder, ohne dass wir daran teilnehmen, sind wir gegen so holde Anerbietung unempfänglich, dann tritt das grösste Übel, die schwerste Krankheit ein." This is the root of Werther's malady. He perishes because he is tormented by the instability of life. Instead of participating in its constant ebb and flow, he is detached from the life-giving force, and remains a mere spectator of the great cycle of change. Rilke, too, knew this tragic isolation and described it in the Eighth Duino Elegy:

> Dieses heisst Schicksal: gegenüber sein
> und nichts als das und immer gegenüber.
>
> Und wir: Zuschauer, immer, überall,
> dem allen zugewendet und nie hinaus!
> Uns überfüllts. Wir ordnens. Es zerfällt.
> Wir ordnens wieder und zerfallen selbst.

Werther does not grow. He merely moves with ever-increasing inevitability towards his appointed end. The only real action of which this passive spectator of life is capable is to abolish his own existence. He is not able to persuade himself that order rules in the universe; the universe falls to pieces in his mind. God, nature, society and the individual—Werther desires their fusion into an embracing unity, but feels himself thrust into the periphery of existence, where he dwells in isolation. Goethe recognized the pathological aspect of a desire for loneliness. "Jeder Unmut", he says in *Dichtung und Wahrheit*, "ist eine Geburt, ein Zögling der Einsamkeit". "Wollen wir uns finden", writes Hugo von Hofmannsthal in *Gespräch über Gedichte*, likewise warning against introspection, "so dürfen wir nicht in unser Inneres hinabsteigen, draussen sind wir zu finden, draussen". But Werther seeks satisfaction in the recesses of his being. He exclaims in his letter of May 22nd: "Ich kehre in mich selbst zurück, und finde eine Welt!"

This letter reveals his spiritual malaise. Life, he says, is a dream because the active and the speculative powers of man are in bondage. For him even the hope of immortality, the prospect of a freer existence in the beyond, is merely a form of resignation, "eine träumende Resignation", a brightly-coloured vista painted on the walls that hold us imprisoned. Here we see how advanced Werther's malady is at an early stage in the novel. He is out of tune with the external world and his only refuge is his "inner world", the realm of his imagination. But even in this world disappointment awaits him; his imagination is not plastic and productive, but merely intuitive: "Ich kehre in mich selbst zurück, und finde eine Welt! Wieder mehr in Ahnung und dunkler Begier als in Darstellung und lebendiger Kraft". The essential difference between Werther and his creator becomes clear when we take heed of these words. Goethe survived his own playful attempts to commit suicide, not only because he had a sense of humour ("So lachte ich mich zuletzt selbst aus . . . und beschloss, zu leben"), but also because he was able to transmute reality into poetry. This he was able to do since he possessed what both he and Novalis called creative imagination, "produktive Einbildungskraft", the power to embody moods in concrete

images. He described this faculty when accounting for the letter-form of *Werther* in *Dichtung und Wahrheit*. Among his accomplishments Werther also possesses artistic sensibility. But he is a dilettante in Goethe's sense of the term, an impressionist lacking the capacity of productivity: "Überhaupt will der Dilettant in seiner Selbstverkennung das Passive an die Stelle des Aktiven setzen. . . . Was dem Dilettanten eigentlich abgeht, ist Architektonik im höchsten Sinne, diejenige ausübende Kraft, welche erschafft, bildet, konstituiert". (*Über den Dilettantismus.*)

In his artistic predilections, as elsewhere, Werther is a passive spectator rather than an active participator. Even in his enthusiasm for Homer and Ossian he betrays his fatal weakness of relating things to himself, without entering truly into their being. He reads Homer while he strings peas and turns to Ossian to find there a reflection of his own moods. This reveals his lack of real empathy. To deny this quality to Werther may seem a paradox, particularly when we remember his attitude to nature as he expresses it in the letter of May 10th. Certainly he is attuned to nature; he shows what Goethe in *Dichtung und Wahrheit* calls "ein inniges Anklingen, ein Mitschwingen ins Ganze", but Werther's empathy is a purely passive affair. The concluding sentences of that letter are a remarkable proof of this defect. He yearns to express in his drawings the feeling which the beauty of nature has aroused in him, but fails to do so: "Ich gehe darüber zu Grunde, ich erliege unter der Gewalt der Herrlichkeit dieser Erscheinungen". He lacks the power of an inward organization of impressions, which every true artist must possess. "Ich weiss nicht, wie ich mich ausdrücken soll", he writes on July 21st, explaining the weakness of his imagination, "meine vorstellende Kraft ist so schwach, alles schwimmt und schwankt so vor meiner Seele, dass ich keinen Umriss packen kann".

This vagueness is characteristic not only of Werther's artistic efforts, but also of his attitude to nature and to life. It is a weakness which, like his fundamental egotism, his inability to transcend the limitations of his own personality and experiences, explains the hopelessness of his situation. His vague longings are necessarily doomed to disappointment. "Ein grosses dämmerndes Ganze

ruht vor unserer Seele, unsere Empfindung verschwimmt darin wie unser Auge, und wir sehnen uns, ach! unser ganzes Wesen hinzugeben, uns mit aller Wonne eines einzigen grossen herrlichen Gefühls ausfüllen zu lassen.—Und ach! wenn wir hinzu eilen, wenn das Dort nun Hier wird, ist alles vor wie nach, und wir stehen in unserer Armut, in unserer Eingeschränktheit, und unsere Seele lechzt nach entschlüpftem Labsale"(June 21st).

Werther's weakness is nowhere shown more strikingly than in his relation to Lotte. His love for her is profound, but it is by no means a unique experience for him. Goethe's account in *Dichtung und Wahrheit* contains an illuminating paragraph on the recurrence of love, "die Wiederkehr der Liebe", one of the causes of misanthropy, and it is clear from the novel itself that he desired Werther's love for Lotte to partake of this quality of disillusionment. When we consider Werther's relationship not only with her, but also with Lenore's sister and with "die Freundin meiner Jugend" (cf. letters of May 4th and 17th), we see that what he really seeks in his friendship with women is an enhancement of his own self-esteem. In his elation he thinks only of himself: "Ich hab' sie gehabt", he says of the feelings aroused in him by his departed friend, "ich habe das Herz gefühlt, die grosse Seele, in deren Gegenwart ich mir schien mehr zu sein, als ich war, weil ich alles war, was ich sein konnte". (May 17th.) "Wie wert ich mir selbst werde, wie ich . . . mich selbst anbete, seitdem sie mich liebt", he writes about Lotte on July 13th. Are these the words of a true lover? Goethe has drawn the stages of Werther's relationship with Lotte from gay companionship to sentimental attachment, infatuation, obstinate passion and cruel self-assertion. This love he described in *Dichtung und Wahrheit* as a product of the separation of Werther's sensual desires from his moral instincts, the divorce between his appetite for love and his sense of devotion. Werther's capacity for true love, if he ever possessed such a gift, perishes in egotistic sensuality long before he commits suicide.

Accompanying this moral disintegration is his physical decline. At the beginning of the novel he speaks of his turbulent emotions, of his "oft schauderndes Herz", his "empörtes Blut", and later on of

his feeling of suffocation, his "gepresstes Herz", "innere unbehagliche Ungeduld", and "Beklemmung". With remarkable originality, considering the time when the work was written, Goethe gives a convincing picture of the physiological symptoms attending spiritual decay. Only occasionally does Werther find relief from his growing sense of oppression. A calming effect is produced upon him by a spectacle of idyllic domestic happiness, such as that offered by the peasant woman and her children. His attachment to Lotte is likewise inspired by his admiration for domestic bliss. Tormented by his isolation, he cannot find any collective unit to which he may cling, except the family, and, significantly, it is not his own family. Every other form of organized society, whether at Wahlheim, at the University or at the Embassy, irks him. "Die patriarchalische Idee" is the ideal form of social organization for him, and it is based on the principle of family relationships.

Werther's high evaluation of the family is perhaps due to the fact that since the death of his father in the days of his childhood he had not enjoyed the benefits of family life. We hear of quarrels between different branches of the family and Werther defends his aunt against his mother's accusations. His relationship with his mother is clearly an unsatisfactory one; she does not possess his confidence and he blames her for leaving the idyllic village where he was born in order to live in an "intolerable" city. From this remark and other observations made by Werther we gain the impression that his maladjustment was caused by his need of that kind of sheltered existence which the family provides. His idealization of domesticity and the patriarchal state, and his love for children as well as the "simple folk", may represent an over-compensation for his own missed opportunities.

In *Dichtung und Wahrheit* Goethe makes a perspicacious observation which offers another explanation of Werther's malaise and permits us to recognize the social significance of this novel. Speaking of the misanthropic feelings engendered in Germany when he wrote the work, he points to the influence of English literature where a similar tendency prevailed. But, he goes on to say, an Englishman who in his youth protested the vanity of life

could later overcome his pessimism by playing his part in the world of affairs, in "Weltgeschäften . . . und im Parlament, bei Hofe, im Ministerium, auf Gesandtschaftsposten". In Germany, on the other hand, no relief for private disabilities could be obtained from public service. In the eighteenth century a young German like Werther lived a dreary existence "in einem schleppenden, geistlosen, bürgerlichen Leben". His suicide was the result not merely of maladjustment, but also of a total lack of opportunities for adjustment. A finely-tempered, sensitive and gifted youth who was not artistically creative, when he was born into such a void, was easily driven to the resolve to take his own life.

When Goethe, speaking as the "editor", appealed for our admiration and our sympathy, he was thinking of these aspects of Werther's character and his fate. He presents a situation which makes it impossible for the reader to maintain a censorious attitude. Werther's self-destruction is inevitable from the moment when his story begins to unfold. As early as the 22nd of May he thinks of suicide as a means to escape from the "prison" of life. It has been said, however, that the point when he does commit this act is chosen arbitrarily, since it might have occurred earlier or later. This is not the whole truth, for Goethe's novel is a masterpiece of artistic economy. Werther's suicide becomes an inescapable necessity only when every other avenue of redress has been tried by him and found wanting, and when the balance of his emotional life has been irretrievably disturbed. Werther's story is the tale of one of life's dilettantes, whom life has maimed and whom it destroys because his crippled faculties cannot be restored to health either by nature or by society or by creative artistic activity or even by faith in God.

Step by step we are taken along the path that leads to his inescapable end. The story, as it is developed before our eyes, exhibits every mark of an inevitable occurrence. *Werther* is a novel possessing greater tragic power than Goethe later permitted for this genre in his theory and it is written in language of unprecedented tragic range and beauty. But it is a novel of an exceptional kind, since it presents the hero's fate in a series of

self-revealing letters which resemble the monologues and the dialogues of a drama. In *Dichtung und Wahrheit* Goethe called the epistolary form a manner of presentation resembling that of a drama. In his next novel, *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre*, this dramatic quality yielded entirely to an "epic" manner of presentation, a treatment which was necessitated by Goethe's desire to pay equal attention to the character and to the *milieu* of his hero.

After the completion of the work in 1796, Goethe corresponded with Schiller on the differences between epic and dramatic poetry. His views on this subject strongly resemble those on the distinctions between the novel and the drama which were incorporated in *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre*. The results of this correspondence are contained in the essay *Über epische und dramatische Dichtung* of December, 1797, in which Goethe and Schiller state that the "rhapsodist", the archetype of the epic poet, surveying events with serene detachment, "sollte als ein höheres Wesen in seinem Gedicht nicht selbst erscheinen". In *Werther* the author's hand is always visible, but in *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* he achieves almost complete objectivity. To a large extent this "serenity" is enhanced by his ironical attitude to his own hero, an attitude that is markedly absent in *Werther*.

The finer points of Goethe's "classical" novel are easily overlooked when his irony is not appreciated. Novalis was one of the first to observe this quality, although he attributed to it a romantic flavour which it does not possess: "Die Philosophie und Moral des Romanes sind romantisch. Das Gemeinste wird wie das Wichtigste mit romantischer Ironie angesehen und dargestellt". At a later date he adversely criticized the novel because its purpose ultimately was a denial of Romanticism. Novalis failed to see that behind his ironic mask Goethe concealed a serious meaning which is fully revealed at the end of the work, that portion of *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* which the Romantics found most tedious and irritating. We must not be misled by Goethe's detached style into overlooking his profounder personal concern in the subject of human development, the principal content of the novel.

This problem forms an integral part of a wide range of scientific

investigations which occupied Goethe in the nineties of the eighteenth century. Whether his inquiries related to individual phenomena of nature or to a species, to plants or to animals, one concept dominated his thought. This was the belief that each phenomenon is the product of two factors: an inherent urge which determines its being, and external reality which modifies its shape. In the realm of plant and animal life Goethe denoted the process of interrelation between these inner and outward factors by the term *Metamorphose*, while in the realm of human life he called it *Bildung*. Essentially these terms mean the same thing, although, as will be seen in *Wilhelm Meister*, the problem of *Bildung* is complicated by the fact that human beings possess the will to direct their own development and that of others, and to substitute one aim for another and so give their development a new direction.

Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre contains the fundamental principles of Goethe's philosophy of life which he elaborated during his classical period in Weimar. In its present form the novel is a modification of an earlier plan under the influence of this philosophy. In his alteration of the original design he was aided by his acquaintanceship with Karl Philipp Moritz whom he met in Rome. His original intention when he began to write the work was to portray the making of a creative artist in the realms of the drama and the theatre. There are some ironic touches in *Wilhelm Meisters theatralische Sendung*, the name given to the early draft of the novel when it was discovered in 1909, but for the most part it is a serious depiction of Wilhelm's poetic development. Goethe was not able to complete the treatment of this theme. Writing in 1819 in *Tag- und Jahreshefte* he said about the work that its original idea contained the notion of an aberration in the search for *Bildung:* "Die Anfänge 'Wilhelm Meisters' hatten lange geruht. Sie entsprangen aus einem dunklen Vorgefühl der grossen Wahrheit: Dass der Mensch oft etwas versuchen möchte, wozu ihm Anlage von Natur versagt ist, unternehmen und ausüben möchte, wozu ihm Fertigkeit nicht werden kann". This idea is fully realized in the completed novel. Stimulated by the example of Moritz, who had endeavoured to

escape from hampering conditions of life by becoming an actor, but had learned from experience that he possessed little talent for the stage, Goethe portrayed the story of a man of average ability and no longer wished to depict an exceptional being, a genius. Wilhelm, like Moritz, is misled by his ambition, but ultimately he recognizes his mistake and becomes a useful member of society.

Although Goethe's purpose in *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* is clearly a didactic one, the novel remains a product of his overriding artistic principle to give a presentation of truth rather than a treatise on life. Irony is a vehicle for his teaching, and his ironical attitude safeguards his artistic interests. It keeps his ideas on the plane of representation and thus prevents them from falling to the level of comment. If commentaries do become necessary to make his meaning explicit, he uses certain characters, e.g. Jarno, to act as his mouthpieces. These characters are not, however, introduced merely to perform this function. In the course of the novel they become increasingly important as the representatives of that ideal of personal and social culture, towards which Wilhelm Meister's education is orientated and from which it receives its ultimate meaning.

This aspect of the work Novalis failed to appreciate. As a Romantic interested primarily in the culture of the individual and in a world created by poetic fancy, he rejected the social and what he termed the "economic" values of the novel. But it is here that its true purport lies. Goethe abandoned his ironic presentation of Wilhelm's character when the process of education was nearing its completion, for the solution of the problem of human culture was serious enough to merit an explicit treatment.

At the beginning of the novel Wilhelm is a callow youth whose tastes, views and manners are ill-formed. He has conceived a passion for the stage which has been produced by three factors. From his father he has inherited a tendency toward ostentatiousness. This point is made by Goethe indirectly in the vivid sketch of old Meister's character. Secondly, Wilhelm has fallen in love with the actress Marianne and this circumstance influences him in his choice of the stage as a career. Thirdly, he has devoted much

time in his early youth to marionettes and subsequently to other theatrical performances at home. His predilection for the theatre, however, reveals no signs of real talent for the actor's or the dramatist's art. It is significant that the truly artistic achievements recorded in the novel are the work of Serlo, and, in a different medium, of Mignon and the Harper. In Romantic novels of the type of *Wilhelm Meister* the hero himself is the embodiment of the artistic impulse. Wilhelm is neither an artist nor a poet. Ultimately art has a refining influence on him, but like Werther, although for different reasons, he is a dilettante.

In his observations on dilettantism Goethe says that it does the greatest amount of harm in the theatre. The dilettante, he believes, lacks the power of transcending his subject. This criticism may with justice be directed against Wilhelm. One of the characters in the novel hints that his taste had been debased in his youth by the marionette plays, and on his own admission Wilhelm is attracted mainly by the melodramatic parts of the plays in which he acts. He buys a number of critical works on the theatre, but leaves most of them unread, excusing himself with the plausible pretence that he is an apprentice engaged in learning his craft, and not yet a master. He has a true regard for the dignity of an artist's profession, but his own taste in painting is crude. The "content" of a picture is more important for him than its "art". Nor are his views on life anything but naïve. On several occasions the character referred to as "der Unbekannte" censures Wilhelm for his belief in fate, which he confuses with chance, and tells him that the art of living is a form of creative activity to be practised with care: "Jeder hat sein eigen Glück unter den Händen, wie der Künstler eine rohe Materie, die er zu einer Gestalt umbilden will". These words describe the principle of *Bildung* which is elaborated in the novel. Wilhelm has to learn the hard lesson of self-formation through the refinement of his tastes and the sharpening of his mind and, above all, through the recognition of the incompatibility between his talents and his own ambition.

Having given us an ironic portrayal of Wilhelm's character, Goethe presents his progress from his pursuit of an illusory aim to his achievement of an established position in life. The means

which Goethe employs to depict this development is the well-known device of sending his hero on a journey. The basis of *Wilhelm Meister* is picaresque, but upon this foundation Goethe constructed a pilgrim's progress.

Wilhelm's discovery of Marianne's apparent infidelity has one salutary effect on him. He is roused from his earlier complacency about his own merits and forced to realize his deficiencies as a poet and an actor. The resolve, however, to abandon his efforts in these fields is not maintained, since on the journey which he undertakes in order to transact business for his father he falls in with a company of strolling actors, whereupon his former aspirations are re-awakened. But now he is confronted with practical problems of the theatre and with the hardships of a trouper's life, none of which he has known before. His knowledge of the theatre becomes more refined and his contacts with the world broader. Through his association with Mignon and the Harper the joys and worries and the profounder mysteries of life are revealed to him. He also enters into contact with the "great world" of the aristocracy, where he is well received, although his behaviour lacks polish, as his unfortunate discourse on Racine shows. His progress denotes a refinement of manners and an increase in his sense of responsibility.

The theatre now assumes a new importance for Wilhelm. In his letter to Werner he explains that his desire to be an actor is not an end in itself, but a means to acquire social attainments which a bourgeois like himself can, he believes, achieve in no other way. The stage has become for him a means to acquire culture and he signs the contract with Serlo in the spirit of this ideal.

In effect, however, this development marks a decisive turn in a new direction. Significantly, Wilhelm has Nathalie's image in mind when he signs the document. It is a step leading ultimately to his abandonment of the theatre after he has been initiated into the history and the affairs of the *Turmgesellschaft*. This change begins with his reading of *Die Bekenntnisse einer schönen Seele*, the spiritual history of a relative of the principal members in that Society who is not herself admitted to membership. The *Bekenntnisse* are a record of *Bildung* in the religious sense of this term,

a description of the achievement of spiritual perfection. Wilhelm is clearly influenced by this account in his own progress towards the integration of his personality, but his path lies in another direction. The *Turmgesellschaft* represents a wider, if not a profounder ideal of culture. It embraces the principle of trial by error, the view that an individual is the arbiter of his own education and that he can achieve true culture only if life has taught him to recognize and accept his own limitations. Guided by the members of the Society into whose orbit he is drawn more and more closely, Wilhelm finally recognizes the vanity of his theatrical ambitions. Thus a complete re-orientation concludes his education.

Goethe's positive valuation of error as a stimulus to human development is the central doctrine of *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* no less than of *Faust*. In the last resort the work is an educational novel in the widest sense, embracing the aspects of natural growth, individual development and personal guidance which Pestalozzi emphasized as the essential ingredients of the total process of education. Goethe's novel is an artistic presentation of this process.

It may be said that the artistic value of *Wilhelm Meister* suffers from the addition of the final portion. The plot becomes tenuous and Goethe's invention pedestrian, although he never quite abandons the novelist's art of telling a story. When we survey the novel as a whole, perhaps we first recall its poetic beauties, the variety of its characterization and invention, the urbanity of its tone and its language, the tragic figures of Mignon and the Harper, the descriptions of eighteenth-century theatrical life. But in a higher critical assessment it emerges as a story of spiritual progress, told, we may say despite De Quincey's mordant strictures, with consummate artistry and good taste. As an example of the cultural novel it has rarely been equalled and never excelled. The technical problem which confronted Goethe was more complicated than that which he faced in *Werther*. In tracing the evolution of character against the background of intricate and shifting external influences of a general as well as a specific nature, he could not utilize the dramatic style again. One of

his greatest achievements in *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* was his ability to reduce a vast number of impressions to the order of an aesthetic pattern without sacrificing their fluidity, to reveal their total significance and yet to preserve their individual quality.

This claim is generally not made with equal confidence for the continuation of the work, *Wilhelm Meisters Wanderjahre*, the prelude to the projected *Meisterjahre* which Goethe never executed. Is this a work which retains a sufficient degree of narrative content to merit the title of a novel? Or did Goethe here finally cross the borderline that separates this admittedly flexible literary form from the plain treatise on life? The story has become more tenuous than it was even at the end of the *Lehrjahre* and the "prosaic" sentiments are now the prevailing element. The inimitable Philine has been transmogrified into a seamstress, Jarno into a miner, Friedrich into a scribe and Lothario, perhaps with more justification, into a soldier. Useful occupations have been found for all the merry companions of a happier past. Utilitarianism has triumphed over art, and in its formal aspect the work appears to be no more than a series of disjointed disquisitions interlarded with *Novellen* and animated by a bewildering number of characters who, individually and in groups, seem to have little connection with one another.

Such has been the verdict of posterity and Goethe himself perhaps provoked this judgment by appearing again as the "editor" of a collection of "miscellaneous papers". He described the work as a "garland" and emphasized its technical contents: "Sogar fehlt es nicht an Heften, der wirklichen Welt gewidmet, statistischen, technischen und sonst realen Inhalts". But, he continued, "diese als ungehörig absuzondern, fällt schwer, da Leben und Neigung, Erkenntnis und Leidenschaft, sich wunderbar vereinigend, im engsten Bunde miteinander fortschreiten". In this book passion and knowledge are the twin manifestations of life that cannot be easily separated from one another.

Goethe's description hints at an underlying unity of conception and a desire on his part to depict the variety within the unity of life by means of a new technique. In his "classical" period he had strictly obeyed the principle of establishing unity in variety.

Now, in his old age, he appears to return to his youthful tendency in the *Sturm und Drang* days, the desire to emphasize the variety of life within its embracing unity. The composition of *Wilhelm Meisters Wanderjahre* is a singular instance of Goethe's preoccupation with the problem of form. It represents a further stage in his effort, clearly shown in the *Lehrjahre*, to give an artistic presentation of the diverse aspects of life which possess a unity in life, but cannot be easily combined in a single aesthetic pattern. The search for an adequate form occupied his attention for a number of years. He began to write the *Wanderjahre* in 1807 when he composed some of the *Novellen* contained in it, together with a sketchy framework story. In 1820 he added the section entitled *Die pädagogische Provinz* and from 1821 to 1829, besides making other additions, he devoted his energy to the task of unification. The whole of the material was important for him and he sacrificed none of it, except *Die Wahlverwandtschaften* which had grown into a full-size novel. He retained the accounts of human passion represented in the *Novellen*, the treatises on technical processes like spinning and weaving, the theories of education, the accounts of religious principles and the treatment of problems such as emigration. Of the finished work he repeatedly said that it was cast in different moulds, but that it possessed a unity of purpose; it was "nicht aus einem Guss, aber doch aus einem Sinn". Considering this statement and the labour which Goethe devoted to the work, we are compelled to conclude that its structure is not the result of failing craftsmanship, but the product of a clear intention.

Into the centre of the first book Goethe placed the first chapter, and into the middle of the whole work the second instalment, of *Die pädagogische Provinz*. This enunciation of the ideas which he believed to be the guiding principles of life in the modern world represents the focal point of interest of the entire volume. Its fundamental unity, as conceived by Goethe, consists in the relation of all the other parts to the doctrines set forth here. The *Wanderjahre* deals primarily with the manifold aspects of life which the inauguration of a new era in European civilization had brought into being. Goethe saw with regret the passing of

the ideal of *Bildung* which belonged to the eighteenth century and which he had defined in the *Lehrjahre*, but he also recognized that the new machine age demanded the substitution of a technical and a collective effort in the place of the outworn ideal of the development of personality based on aesthetic principles. For this reason he gave so much prominence to the accounts of mechanical processes and through Jarno voiced the rejection of the older notion of universal culture in favour of specialized training: "Es ist jetzo die Zeit der Einseitigkeiten . . . Mache ein Organ aus dir . . . Von unten hinauf zu dienen ist überall nötig. Sich auf ein Handwerk zu beschränken, ist das beste".

Goethe's concentration on collective principles is revealed by the fact that Wilhelm Meister is no longer the central figure of the work. No single personality now dominates the action. Our interest is distributed among a large number of characters who are all to be judged by the same standard, the necessity of resignation. All human passions of a purely individualist kind must be given up in favour of collective values. This sacrifice is demanded in the interest of the new society organized on a communal basis. The distinction between the culture of the different classes of society, which had represented an important item in the depiction of Wilhelm's education in the *Lehrjahre*, no longer exists in the *Wanderjahre*. Goethe also uses the theme of wandering to a new purpose. In the earlier novel he had emphasized the value of travelling for the development of an individual's character; in *Wilhelm Meisters Wanderjahre* he views it as a means to overcome one-sided attachments in the interest of the collective effort.

The distinctive feature of this work is its treatment of topical questions. Goethe's perspicacious analysis of the requirements of modern life is remarkable not only because it was a prophecy, but also because it was inspired by a profound attachment to human rather than material values. He saw the need of a technocratic culture, but he was also aware of the dangers besetting this new world, the impoverishment of individual character through specialization and the mechanization of the means of production. To counterbalance this inevitable development he emphasized

the necessity of profounder contacts with nature and the universe. Hence he gave such prominence to the "Religion of Respect" in *Die pädagogische Provinz* and to the figure of Makarie in the remainder of the work. Like "die schöne Seele" in the *Lehrjahre* she is an exception among human beings, and she is an even greater symbol of the higher demands of human life. With her mysterious ability to exist simultaneously on two levels of existence, on the terrestrial and the astral planes, she is the living embodiment of a supreme value in the world of necessarily one-sided beings.

Wilhelm Meisters Wanderjahre is thus the logical sequel to *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* as regards its contents and its form. In the latter work Goethe treated the theme of individual culture against the background of contemporary society, without attempting to give the whole picture. He omitted the political side of life which Wieland placed in the centre of his novel *Agathon*. In the *Wanderjahre* Goethe again paid little attention to this element. Compared with the earlier novel of Wieland, however, and with his own previous work, he presented here a more comprehensive picture of social life, and his treatment has greater topical value. The new content of this "bizarre work", this "wunderliche Opus", as he himself frequently called it, resides in its prophetic quality. *Wilhelm Meisters Wanderjahre* may be ranked among the great Utopian novels of the nineteenth century.

Considered in the light of its social significance, *Die Wahlverwandtschaften* is a novel of quite another order. Goethe here treats the relationships of men and women and the tasks which confront them not from the point of view of a progressive development of society, but from that of a static situation in society, the permanent condition of man. He selects for his main theme an aspect of human life that transcends the influences of time and environment. The problem of human passion as it affects the institution of marriage is not treated in *Die Wahlverwandtschaften* as being capable of modification in different ages and in different structures of society. This possibility is not seriously considered, it is almost totally ignored. When the Count puts forward his friend's plan

of experimental marriages and divorces, no consideration is given to the changing conceptions of the problem in social history.

In this novel, then, society is the arena, not the focal point of interest. Goethe's intention is not directed to the advancement of society. For this reason he again does not emphasize class distinctions. The labourers are an integral part of the Baron's estate; the differences between their outlook and their opportunities and those of their masters are not mentioned; nor is there a noticeable discrepancy between the bourgeois and the aristocratic members of the group. This is equally true in *Wilhelm Meisters Wanderjahre*, but for a different reason. The collective idea of that work necessitated the treatment of the factors common to all the classes and sections of society; it was the growth of a social organism as seen in its individual representatives that was Goethe's principal subject. In *Die Wahlverwandtschaften* the members of a group absorb our interest, not, it is true, solely as individuals, but in their relationship with one another, yet always apart from any issues of the organization of society.

This feature of the novel is reflected in Goethe's use of names. He consistently employs two methods of nomenclature. The secondary figures are always referred to by their titular or their professional appellations, e.g. the Count, the Baroness, the Assistant, the Architect. The characters with whom we are really concerned, on the other hand, are called by their Christian names and only Mittler, another secondary figure, is known to us by his surname. It may appear strange that the Captain is an exception to this rule. We know that his first name is Otto, but after Charlotte's reference to it in the third chapter no further mention occurs. This circumstance is not accidental. Although the Captain is an important character in the novel, his personality is not of such decisive significance as that of Eduard, of Charlotte and of Ottilie. He plays a more passive role than they do and his personal problems are portrayed only when they affect these other characters, e.g. when Eduard insists on inviting him to the castle or when the Englishman tells the story of *Die wunderlichen Nachbarskinder*. The use of Christian names in the place of the more normal practice may be accounted for by Goethe's endeavour

to portray the fortunes of a closed group, an intimate circle, possessing symbolical rather than practical social significance.

That Goethe also desired to depict a permanent condition of human relationships, rather than occurrences "von spezifisch temporärem Gehalt"—a phrase he adopted to commend Lessing's *Minna von Barnhelm*—is revealed by several other features of the novel. Although he normally uses the past tense to describe the events, he employs the historic present in a large number of instances, especially in recording developments of a particularly significant order. This device enforces an impression of timelessness by making the events described a present as well as a past reality. A similar result is obtained by Goethe's careful avoidance of any reference to a particular locality in Germany or to the actual ages and looks of the characters presented before us. All we hear even of Ottilie is contained in Eduard's words in the second chapter that she has beautiful eyes: "Hübsch ist sie, besonders hat sie schöne Augen". By their sentiments and their behaviour rather than by their physical properties these figures become known to us.

Although the problems of passion and divorce are treated by Goethe in *Die Wahlverwandtschaften* as of timeless significance, time itself is an essential ingredient among the factors moulding the destiny of the principal characters. With remarkable insistence Goethe impresses an awareness of the formative power of time on the reader of this novel. But it is also a factor which separates the members of the group from the activities of the world at large. With the exception of Eduard's warlike excursion, of which little is related, and the occasional interruptions of routine by visitors from the outside world, the chief protagonists of the story appear to exist in a region that is spatially and temporally their own. Just as the place where they live cannot be located or identified, so their time seems to belong entirely to themselves. A novel aiming at this quality of timeless neutrality is appropriately cast in a rigid mould. *Die Wahlverwandtschaften* is one of Goethe's most severely-designed works. With considerable ingenuity and skill he employed the devices of symmetry, parallelism, correspondence, repetition and contrast in order to create a highly intricate pattern.

Within this scheme, time, like society, is an aspect of existence, not merely an external reality. It belongs to the form of life in which the characters have their being and Goethe accordingly treats it as a structural element of life, rather than one of its dimensions. Indeed, the shape of things now interests him more than their dynamic nature. In his development as a scientist from the *Metamorphose der Pflanzen* of 1790 to the *Farbenlehre* of 1810 we observe a progress in his study of dynamic processes to include that of form, from a study of *Bildung* indicating a mode of change to the study of *Bildung* in the sense of shape and structure. In his sketch entitled *Bildungstrieb* (1820) he emphasizes an aspect which he had not stressed in his earlier writings on the subject. He now accentuates the phenomenon of Predelineation or Predetermination in the process of Metamorphosis, and in his reflections on Morphology (1822) points out that the word *Bildung* is used "sowohl von dem Hervorgebrachten, als von dem Hervorgebrachtwerdenden", for the process of change as well as the product of this change. The same shift of emphasis is revealed when we compare the two poems *Metamorphose der Pflanzen* (1798) and *Metamorphose der Tiere* (1806). In the former the accent is on the productive change of form: "Bildsam ändre der Mensch selbst die bestimmte Gestalt", whereas in the later poem the stress lies on form and order, "geordnete Bildung":

> Doch im Innern befindet die Kraft der edlern Geschöpfe
> Sich im heiligen Kreise lebendiger Bildung beschlossen.
> Diese Grenzen erweitert kein Gott, es ehrt die Natur sie;
> Denn nur also beschränkt war je das Vollkommene möglich.

This poem was written at approximately the same time as *Die Wahlverwandtschaften* and contains some features of Goethe's mature view of life that are to be found in the novel. One result of the change which Goethe's scientific interests underwent may be discovered in the method of characterization he adopted in *Die Wahlverwandtschaften.*

It is significant that he selects for this novel, in order to illuminate its subject, a parallel phenomenon not from biology, but from chemistry. Announcing the publication on September 4th,

1809, he refers to the influence of his studies in physics on the work, and in Chapter 4 mention is made of the elements of physics and chemistry. The fundamental laws governing natural phenomena are stated to be their inner and their outer relationships: "An allen Naturwesen, die wir gewahr werden, bemerken wir zuerst, dass sie einen Bezug auf sich selbst haben". "Wie jedes gegen sich selbst einen Bezug hat, so muss es auch gegen andere ein Verhältnis haben". This is Goethe's later formulation of the principle of interrelation which he had formerly conceived as a dynamic process. His use of terms denoting relationships, viz., *Bezug* and *Verhältnis*, in the novel indicates that his interest is primarily in the interactions between established rather than between developing beings. Development is an important element in *Die Wahlverwandtschaften*, but it affects the relationships between the four principal characters, not their innate natures. Goethe is at pains to present these men and women as fully-matured personalities and he does not attempt to account for their acquired characteristics, e.g. for Eduard's wilfulness and his self-indulgence, whereas he had carefully traced the influences that moulded Wilhelm's character in the *Lehrjahre*.

The one exception is Ottilie. She occupies a special position in the novel and may be claimed as the heroine of the work. In her case Goethe resumes his interest in tracing development of character. She is the only figure who is, at the beginning, in a stage of relative immaturity and, by contrast with her, Charlotte's daughter Luciane, although she is of the same age, is a fully developed and remarkably self-possessed personality. Ottilie's development from a naïve eagerness to please her fellow-creatures to a saintly rejection of life forms the central theme of the second part of the novel. The stages of this evolution are clearly recognizable. The situation in which she is involved at first affects her character adversely. The relations between her and Charlotte become strained when her love for Eduard grows in intensity, and her more engaging qualities are obscured by suspicion and distrust. But she matures rapidly, becomes "erwachsener, gebildeter", and finally outgrows her own infirmities in the realization of her aberration.

It is, in the strictest sense, an aberration, a departure from the path prescribed to her by nature, for she feels that she has broken her own laws. "Ich bin aus meiner Bahn geschritten, ich habe meine Gesetze gebrochen", she says when the consequences of her association with Eduard become clear to her. Despite the importance which Goethe attached to the development of her personality, she is not entirely an exception to the practice he adopted in *Die Wahlverwandtschaften*, to reveal the fundamental constitution of his characters rather than their gradual formation. Ottilie "becomes what she is", she illustrates Goethe's lines in *Urworte. Orphisch*:

> Und keine Zeit und keine Macht zerstückelt
> Geprägte Form, die lebend sich entwickelt.

The impression which we receive of her individuality at the beginning of the novel from the letters of her school-teachers and from Charlotte's comments on them is fully, if unexpectedly, realized in her final apotheosis. She is a total personality achieving the full realization of her essential form.

Like *Werther*, *Die Wahlverwandtschaften* is a tragic novel, but it ends on a note of triumph, not of defeat. Nevertheless, the entanglements and complications, the loss of happiness and of contentment, are not effaced by this ultimate reconciliation. Goethe succeeded, against his theoretical convictions, in creating a novel that is dominated by the laws of a higher necessity than the "Gesinnungen und Begebenheiten" which occur in the sphere of social life.

When we survey Goethe's dramas and his novels, we find that he treats two principal themes: 1. The relations of an individual to external reality, which may be represented by a group of other individuals or by a higher, if not necessarily a supernatural, power. 2. The relation between conflicting, although not always incompatible forces within an individual. Both themes occur in his dramas and in his novels. Beneath Werther's and Ottilie's relationships with other human beings lie their more absorbing inner conflicts, and similarly Iphigenie's and Tasso's contacts with the

outer world lead to the discovery of their own inner disharmony. It is, then, impossible to differentiate between Goethe's novels and his dramas by considering the themes which he treats in them. There is no real difference between the conflicts presented in these two genres. Goethe's greatness as a writer lies not only in his versatility, but also in the ultimate unity of all his work. Among his most impressive achievements is the portrayal of the same conflicts, now in the drama, now in the form of the novel.

But if the themes of his dramatic and his narrative productions are the same, there is a difference between the interest aroused in the dramas and that created in the novels. In the former genre Goethe shows the hero's relations with the external world in order to portray his success or his failure to achieve self-integration as an end in itself. In his novels this task is presented not as an aim *per se*, but as a function of human life, particularly of social life. Self-integration is the ideal result of the human contacts presented in the dramas. In the novels it is the means to establish such contacts. In Goethe's dramas the paths lead from society to the individual. In his novels, excepting *Die Wahlverwandtschaften*, particularly when Ottilie's development is considered, they lead from the individual to society. In the dramas our attention is absorbed primarily by the protagonists and we must assess their relationships with the other figures only in the light of their own inner conflicts. This is true of Tasso no less than of Faust and Iphigenie. In the novels, on the other hand, our interest is aroused mainly in the human relationships. It is significant that Goethe used titles in accordance with this distinction. His most important dramas mention the principal figures only, but in his novels he indicates their relationship with the external world or with one another.

Faust and Iphigenie are models of achievement, but Wilhelm Meister lacks distinction even where he is successful. Tasso and Werther reveal the same degree of difference. Whether Goethe's dramatic heroes are successful in life or not, they are heroic personalities, whereas in his novels he deals with more commonplace personages. This is not untrue even of Werther and Ottilie. By comparison with their dramatic counterparts their talents do

not rise far above the level of common humanity, although Ottilie does ultimately achieve a unique distinction.

In another respect the novels and the dramas of Goethe resemble each other strongly and thus reveal a fundamental quality of his art. The conflicts which he portrays in both genres are never solved unless the human beings engaged in these conflicts are supported by higher powers outside and beyond themselves. The efforts of Faust and of Iphigenie receive the sanction of a benevolent deity, and Wilhelm is aided by the *Turmgesellschaft*. Where Goethe's characters, however, endeavour to work out their salvation unassisted by superior forces, they are doomed to defeat. Werther fails because his conflicts are unrelated to any higher reality, because every form of life causes him distress. He feels himself abandoned by nature and ultimately even God is for him a "Vater, den ich nicht kenne". When Tasso loses the favour of the Duke and the Princess there is no higher worldly power to which he can appeal. Antonio is his equal, not his superior, and Tasso's reconciliation with him enforces, rather than relieves, his tragic isolation. *Die Wahlverwandtschaften* is a tragic novel because the conflict engendered by the "chemical affinity" between the two pairs of lovers cannot be solved in all its aspects. No higher reality, not even society, can claim to influence these characters absolutely, since their love is based on a natural law which is inescapable and yet contrary to the moral law. Ottilie alone among them is *en rapport* with the higher world of truth and indeed in her case the conflict is solved, whereas in the case of Eduard, Charlotte and the Captain its solution is inevitably left in abeyance.

A final point arises in the determination of Goethe's art of novel-writing. To what extent is the subjective element in his narrative works a key to their understanding? It is not difficult to trace their autobiographical origin. In each novel Goethe's personal experiences form the source of the narrative. But even where he adheres most closely to life, the result is an artistic rather than a "confessional" presentation of reality. The first impetus to the composition of his novels may be sought in his private experiences, but the composition itself, the artistic

elaboration of the autobiographical material, took place only after these experiences had found confirmation in the life of another person. We have Goethe's own account of the genesis of *Werther* and the part played by Jerusalem's death in the writing of this work. A similar account might be given for the *Lehrjahre* and Moritz's share in its composition. The stories recorded in Goethe's novels transcend the limits of his private experience. They spring from a seed in his own life, but their growth and efflorescence in his mind take us into the realms of his creative artistic activity. Goethe created when his self-knowledge merged with his sympathetic apprehension of external reality, when self-analysis expanded into an imaginative perception of reality outside.

This creative process is visible in the composition of Goethe's dramas no less than in his novels. The unity of his work, as well as the difference between his dramas and his novels, will become clear once more when we view them in this light. *Faust, Iphigenie* and *Tasso*, like the novels, are a fusion of subjective and objective elements, an expansion of subjective experience into the field of objective truth. But whereas in the novels the external examples which confirmed Goethe's own experience, and thus led to artistic creation, are derived from the world of actuality, in the dramas they belong to the realm of legend. It is true that friends and acquaintances also served as models for the figures of his dramas—Herder for Faust, Frau von Stein for Iphigenie and the Princess, Lenz for Tasso. But in the last resort actuality is raised to the plane of legend in the dramas—Tasso's love for the Princess is a piece of legend—whereas in the novels it remains nearer to its original source. With the exception of such relatively unimportant works as *Stella*, all Goethe's dramas, unlike his novels, deal with legendary figures and even *Die natürliche Tochter* may be described as an attempt to view contemporary life in terms of well-known legends. As in the novels, so also in the epic *Hermann und Dorothea* Goethe presented the depiction of contemporary subjects rather than legendary themes, and Ottilie alone in her apotheosis becomes a legendary figure, a dramatic prototype.

The epic and the novel are kindred forms for Goethe, and he

links them together and contrasts them with the drama in his theory. The distinctions which he makes in his correspondence with Schiller on the epic and the drama are a corollary of his observations in *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* on the differences between the novel and the drama. We may surmise that his attempts to write epics on Achilles and on William Tell failed because his narrative impulse conflicted with the presentation of legendary heroes who, in his work, belong to the realm of the drama and not to that of the epic or of the novel.

GOETHE
AND THE THEATRE

by W. H. Bruford

ABOUT a quarter of Goethe's collected works consist of plays of one kind or another, and among them is what is universally considered his greatest single achievement, *Faust*, to which in this volume a separate article is devoted. When we remember, too, that for a quarter of a century Goethe was in charge of the Weimar Court Theatre, it seems a natural assumption that Goethe is to be counted among the great "men of the theatre", like Molière and Shakespeare. Yet in spite of the well-known verses (*Zwischen beiden Welten*) in which Goethe declares that he owes what he is to "William"(Shakespeare), "Stern der schönsten Höhe", and to Frau von Stein, it is generally agreed that he was not so completely and wholeheartedly a dramatist as Shakespeare, or as Schiller and several other German poets. He wrote none of his best plays (always excepting *Faust*, on which he was engaged, on and off, for the whole of his maturity) in the period when he had control of a theatre, none with a professional performance in view, and he consented only late and unwillingly to the performance at Weimar of adapted versions of *Iphigenie*, *Tasso* and *Faust*. He had a profound knowledge of the theatre, and exercised an important influence on the German theatre of

his own day and later, but his best dramatic work is on the whole book-drama. Yet its poetic qualities are such that the attempt has constantly been made to body it forth on the stage, and, as far as *Faust* at least is concerned, with much success. Goethe undoubtedly increased the already high prestige enjoyed in Germany by the poetic drama as a genre, but he was first affected by it himself, and only thus came to devote to the drama talents which found a more natural outlet in the lyric and the novel.

Goethe has himself described better than anyone else how he and his contemporaries were carried away by this enthusiasm for an idealized theatre, both in his autobiography and above all in the unfinished novel of the theatre, *Wilhelm Meisters theatralische Sendung*, begun in 1777, which later grew into *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre*. The completed form makes it clear that the hero, called significantly "William", had mistaken his vocation. We hear of the deep impression made on William as a small child by a puppet-show arranged for him by his grandmother, and of how, some years later, the puppets were brought out again and used with changed costumes and scenery, by the hero and his friends, for any plays they could lay hands on, or such parts of them as they found interesting, particularly the fifth acts. This led to amateur theatricals and early attempts at playwriting. Wilhelm began innumerable plays, all on Biblical subjects, and completed three or four as a boy. All these details are autobiographical, though as the manuscripts were destroyed we know little about Goethe's own early attempts beyond what we learn here about *Belsazar*, a play in Alexandrines, from which a lyrical monologue is quoted. Its characters, says Wilhelm, were like the sort of people of whom no one thinks highly, because they talk a great deal and do nothing. Like Wilhelm, Goethe knew his French classics, and had thought a good deal about the "rules". When the French occupation forces brought their theatre to Frankfort during the Seven Years' War, he was able, before he was fourteen, to see all Racine and Molière and much of Corneille, as well as a varied repertoire of eighteenth-century plays, performed in French, and, through his friendship with the son of an actress, also to go behind the scenes. Even his father's

strict control of his studies was relaxed when he saw what rapid progress the boy was making with the French language, reading and declaiming the classics as he did and writing a mock-heroic comedy of his own in French verse. We must remember these unique opportunities he had enjoyed, as well as the many manuscript volumes of verse and plays that he had written and burnt, in order to understand the facility of his productions at Leipzig, the university which he left on his nineteenth birthday.

While Lessing was writing his *Dramaturgie* for the short-lived "National Theatre" in Hamburg, Goethe was busy with the one-act pastoral, *Die Laune des Verliebten*, and the three-act comedy, *Die Mitschuldigen* (completed in Frankfort later). The National Theatre failed for lack of a good German repertoire, and Goethe's first surviving plays show how completely French and rococo the cultural atmosphere still was in Leipzig in the late sixties, for it is the Goethe who had changed his home-tailored clothes for a suit or two in the latest French fashion who meets us in these plays. They are most accomplished pastiche, and show how much of French grace could survive in German Alexandrines, but the content of the pastoral is entirely conventional and the tone of the comedy too precociously "knowing" to be amusing. It is difficult to find anything in common between these plays and the one which made Goethe's name in Germany when it appeared in 1773, *Götz von Berlichingen* "with the iron hand".

In *Götz* Goethe broke away from the classicistic conventions and wit-poetry of his Leipzig phase and returned, under the influence of Herder, and through him of Rousseau, to " nature", to the depiction of a character who, like those of Shakespeare, as Herder taught him to see them—"Nothing could be more natural than Shakespeare's men"—had been true to his own self in an age when some few Germans, at least, had not been spoilt by outside influences. Götz, a South-German robber-knight of Luther's time, whose autobiography Goethe had stumbled upon in the course of his law studies, is represented by him as the last of nature's noblemen in his age, even his little son, under the influence of his aunt Marie, showing a namby-pamby tendency towards book-learning and a dislike for that active life of instinct

for which Götz is envied even by Brother Martin, the monk. He is opposed in his striving for independence by the Bishop of Bamberg, a prelate loving power and luxury, who wins over to his side by the lure of such things, and the wiles of the pampered and seductive Adelheid, the irresolute Weislingen, the friend of Götz's youth, who had seemed at one point disposed to find his happiness in a draughty hill-castle with Gotz's sister, the gentle Marie. The Bambergers stand for all the degenerate influences that are undermining the old German freedom, and it is characteristic of Götz that he accepts even the leadership of a party of peasants in the Peasant Revolt against his own class—unlike Martin Luther, whose social conservatism at this crisis left such a deep mark on German history. It is an extraordinarily vivid picture that Goethe evokes for us of all classes of society, from the Emperor down to peasants and gypsies, in a Germany that he felt, and made his readers feel, to be moved by vital forces akin to those of his own day. He already possessed in full the capacity which the Romantics were to show later of entering in imagination into the life of past ages and recreating their local colour and atmosphere, so that what German critics call the *Sturm und Drang* style has usually seemed to foreign scholars itself an early form of Romanticism. We can well understand the appeal which such a work would make to the young Walter Scott, who translated it. It would strengthen in him that feeling for the romance of history to which he was predisposed by his love of Border balladry.

Goethe himself had found it above all in Shakespeare, conceived by Herder as a writer of histories, and his play was a conscious attempt to do for Germany, without a Holinshed, what Shakespeare had done for England, but it was not only the lack of comparable national themes in the history of the ramshackle Empire that led Goethe to put family and social, rather than political, interests in the foreground. It was also a misunderstanding of Shakespeare's technique—"His plans are no plans"—and an excessive reaction against French dramatic conventions. In the traditional French tragedy there were few characters, no changes of scene and the utmost concentration in time. It presented the crisis of a clear-cut conflict as a clash of minds and

hearts, expressed in uniformly dignified verse worthy of the high circles in which the action was imagined to take place, and before which the play was performed. What had led up to the crisis was brought to the knowledge of the audience in the backward-looking scenes in dialogue or monologue which formed the exposition, and if the plot involved any violent action it was thought of as happening off-stage and was reported. There was no mingling of tragic and comic. The characters of comedy might be of lower rank, but it allowed itself few or no liberties in construction, even in the new type of sentimental comedy. *Götz* on the other hand called for a page full of characters of all ranks, fifty or more changes of scene, and its rambling action was spread over years. Every step in it was presented before the eyes of the audience, in chronologically-ordered scenes full of movement, some gay, some sad or even tragic, some marked by homely realism. They were held together by the consistency of the author's feeling about the characters and their times, and by having some connection with the fate of the hero, but many were there simply for atmosphere. And finally everyone spoke in the idiom natural to his station and disposition, in racy prose full of proverbs and Biblical phrases, with a disregard of the *convenances* which has made one drastic phrase of the hero itself proverbial.

Even in the revised form that was published in 1773, *Götz* was still a dramatized story, a novel in dialogue. Goethe's next play, *Clavigo*, was also a prose dramatization of autobiographical material, this time merely of an episode in the life of a contemporary, Beaumarchais, about his attempts to bring together his sister and the young Spanish writer Clavijo, who had broken off his engagement to her. The play was written in a week at the request of a Frankfort lady, but as in the Weislingen-Marie sub-plot of *Götz*, Goethe drew partly on his own experience and made out of this anecdote a symbolic "confession" of his feeling of guilt in regard to Friederike Brion. The theme found its final expression of course in the Gretchen tragedy in *Faust*, the supreme dramatic achievement of those Frankfort years. Clavigo and his friend Carlos, the man of feeling and the sharp-tongued rationalist, are contrasting figures like Faust and Mephistopheles,

but on a lower plane, related to the two souls Goethe found within himself. Apart from this the play is chiefly remarkable for its skilful construction, which ensured its immediate success on the stage. Goethe had gone back to his earlier practice and also made a careful study of Lessing's technique in *Emilia Galotti*, where all the features in the French stage tradition that made for effectiveness in his own day had been retained, sensibly combined with some English innovations. Goethe could have turned out domestic tragedies like this by the dozen if he had wished, but his candid friend Merck advised him to leave "such trash" to others. He constantly used dramatic form however for the high-spirited humorous pieces, mainly satires on literary personalities of the time, like *Satyros*, *Götter, Helden und Wieland*, and *Pater Brey*, in which he was so productive during these Frankfort years. In these improvizations we find the type of humour and often the doggerel verse that had taken his fancy in the sixteenth-century Hans Sachs, and here again there are parallels in *Faust*. They have all the freshness, variety and sane objectivity that we find in Goethe's letters, and are amongst the most spontaneous of his writings.

In his last year in Frankfort Goethe wrote a second family piece, with a happy ending this time, and two operettas, and he began *Egmont*, the best of his prose plays after *Götz*. *Stella*, "ein Schauspiel für Liebende", the play parodied by Canning and his collaborators in *The Rovers*, is very much of the age of *Werther*. The situation of Macheath, faced by both his wives in *The Beggar's Opera*, lends itself well to burlesque, but taken in deadly earnest, as it is here, and sentimentalized as well, it is now at any rate intolerable. There are admirable lyrical passages put into the mouth of Stella, and the everyday scenes in the inn with which the play opens are convincingly natural. But Fernando is about the weakest of Goethe's many weak heroes, and the original ending of the play, where both women fall on Fernando's neck, is a *reductio ad absurdum* of Goethe's conciliatory spirit. The two short operettas, *Erwin und Elmire* and *Claudine von Villa Bella*, are after the French model, with prose dialogue and many songs, which include lyrics and ballads such as *Ein Veilchen auf der Wiese stand* and *Es war ein Buhle frech genung*. *Claudine* introduces

us to a full-blooded *Sturm und Drang* brigand, and both are neatly constructed.

By 1775, when he left Frankfort for Weimar, Goethe was already beginning to influence not only the drama but also the theatre of his day. His *Götz* was extremely popular as a book, in various pirated editions. It had never been intended for stage-production, but the difficult task was attempted, first by Koch in Berlin in the year of its appearance, and in the following year (1774), after careful preparation, by Schröder in Hamburg. It did not prove a lasting attraction in either place, but the play was regularly attempted from then on by any theatre that possessed the necessary resources, and was the only work of Goethe's that was fairly frequently acted during his lifetime. *Clavigo* was staged both by Koch and Schröder in 1774, and later never quite disappeared from the repertoire of the German theatre. *Götz* soon influenced stage practice in two important respects. Until now, following the French tradition, the curtain had been raised at the beginning and not lowered till the end of the play, but with the elaborate settings and frequent changes required for plays like *Götz*, it became more and more usual to lower the curtain between the acts—though not until much later between scenes. The realistic atmosphere of *Götz* also called for historical, or pseudo-historical, costumes and they came to be more and more common, especially in the numerous "Ritterstücke", imitations of *Götz*, usually more spectacular and stageworthy, which began to appear from 1775.

Goethe was invited to Weimar by the young Duke, who felt himself attracted by the author of *Götz*, and thought of him as a possible companion and *maître des plaisirs*. It was natural that Goethe should be expected to take a particular interest in the theatre there, but for some years only amateur theatricals were possible. The only theatre in this small town of five thousand inhabitants, an apartment in the old Wilhelmsburg, holding an audience of a hundred at the most, had been destroyed, together with most of the castle, in a big fire in the previous year. A series of German travelling companies had played there in former years, but until a new combined ballroom and small theatre was

erected by private enterprise five years later, the court had to be content with amateur performances. The majority were more interested in French than in German plays, but, with a Goethe to lead them, the German group gained ground. Goethe's own operettas and satires, and new ones that he produced with great facility—*Lila*, *Jery und Bätely*, *Die Fischerin* (with the ballad *Erlkönig*), *Proserpina*, *Der Triumph der Empfindsamkeit*, *Die Vögel*, and the stage-version of *Das Neueste von Plundersweilern* were acted on improvized stages on special Court occasions, such as the birthday of the Dowager Duchess Anna Amalia, who appreciated such things. In winter the theatre was the drawing-room of Anna Amalia's Wittumspalais, but in summer the open-air theatre in the gardens of the country palace, Belvedere, might be used, and *Die Fischerin* was acted beside the Ilm at Tiefurt, near Anna Amalia's small country house. The most notable of these performances was the one in which Goethe appeared as Orestes in the prose version of his *Iphigenie*, in 1779, with Corona Schröter in the title role. Corona Schröter had been engaged as Court opera singer on the recommendation of Goethe, who had admired her in Leipzig, and she took a leading part in the operettas and plays, all the other performers being amateurs.

It was many years before Goethe gave its final form to *Iphigenie*, or even to the still earlier conception of *Egmont*. It was a distracting existence he led in the early Weimar years, and more and more duties were thrust upon him. He soon became a minister responsible for more than one department, and a member of the central *Conseil* of the tiny State. How seriously he took his duties and how they interfered with his writing is clear from his letters, as when, in the throes of completing the prose *Iphigenie*, he writes: "The drama is making no progress here, it is devilish. The King of Tauris has to speak as if no stocking-makers in Apolda were starving". Or when he says that he is trying to turn off all the water from the fountains and cascades (of poetry) and make it do useful work, but now and then a malign spirit will let it loose again and, before he knows where he is, it is all leaping and splashing as before. Yet all the time the response to ever fresh aspects of experience and practical needs was forcing him to

study the laws of nature, to become a scientist as well as administrator and artist, and maturing him as nothing else could have done. He was coming to his conception of the world as an organic whole, where all parts are in relation, and of man as an individuality which grows according to its own innate laws, but in constant interaction with a stubbornly real outside world. The nature of this interaction is the subject of the three dramas completed in the late eighties.

The theme of *Egmont* is that *amor fati* expressed in the poem *Seefahrt* in the image of the sailor who, despite the remonstrances of his anxious friends, puts to sea in a frail bark, "trusting in his Gods, whether he be wrecked or saved"—clearly Goethe himself, embarking on the Weimar adventure—and in Egmont's own lines about the charioteer whose steeds, racing almost out of control, can only be guided here from the boulder, there from the abyss, the lines with which Goethe says he tried to calm the misgivings of Fräulein Delph at Heidelberg, when the Duke's carriage finally arrived for him. It is this feeling of "being lived" rather than living, impelled by an irresistible *Dämon* within, that determines Egmont's actions when he, hitherto a conquering hero, a handsome and popular great noble, is threatened by the cold, calculating power of the Spanish State, personified in Alba. It is instinct against reason, natural growth against artificial control, whether we hear Egmont refusing to follow the Prince of Orange into safety, or defending the traditional privileges of the feudal "estates" of the Netherlanders against Alba's notions of the absolute State. The link with *Götz* is clear. There is the same reverence for the free products of nature and history, the same delight in their rich variety. This is what gives the crowd scenes their Shakespearean quality. In form, much more attention is paid to stage requirements than in *Götz*, but the play is nearer to *Götz* than to *Clavigo*, and the language is still prose, varied in idiom according to the speaker. Towards the end, however, it is distinctly rhythmical, like the prose *Iphigenie*, which went very easily into verse later. As in *Götz* character counts more than plot, and there is an even stronger element of "confession", and that is why Goethe made Egmont a young bachelor instead of a

middle-aged family man, and why he introduced Klärchen "to bathe away the furrows of care from his brow". The historical Egmont had sounder reasons for his action, Schiller rightly urged, and Klärchen was for Schiller a charming irrelevance, morally decidedly questionable. Schiller is right too in his criticism of the close, which is indeed somewhat operatic; it is Egmont justifying his conduct to himself in a dream. Though better constructed than *Götz*, the play has still much of the novel in dialogue, with a marked lyrical colouring.

The fusion of Klärchen and Freedom in Egmont's vision, this notion of the "eternal feminine" that leads men on, is one link between *Egmont* and *Iphigenie*, and both are confessions. In *Egmont*, as in *Werther*, Goethe sacrificed a symbolic figure to rid himself of a dangerous tendency. It was the contribution of art to the building up of that "pyramid of his existence" towards which his many activities had to serve. In *Iphigenie* the emphasis is more on the harmony achieved. Formally, of course, it represents a return from the Shakespearean to the classicistic tradition in drama. It is in the line of Racine's handling of Greek subjects, and eighteenth-century operas like Gluck's *Iphigénie en Aulide* and *en Tauride* or Wieland's *Alceste*. In the atmosphere of a Court, under the influence of Charlotte von Stein, Goethe came to see a new beauty in what had seemed so conventional. Nature and art both attracted him equally now, and seeing what had resulted from the naturalism of the *Sturm und Drang* in the popular theatre of his day, he came to lay more and more stress, as he grew older, on conscious art. But *Iphigenie* is completely German and Goethean in its content. It implies a philosophy based on the firm belief inherited by Goethe's age, half-unconsciously, from Lutheranism, that man, hard pressed by fate, has inward resources, and that the pure in heart shall see God, in the sense that in spite of circumstances they will not lose, but will infect others with, their visionary faith in the good potentialities of man's freedom, the goodness at the heart of things. How otherwise, Goethe or Herder would have asked, for that age did not take kindly to the idea of a special revelation, has humane civilization, *Humanität*, ever established itself, even to the limited extent to which it now

prevails, than by reason of the insight of successive rare spirits, of religious, moral, artistic geniuses?

> Denn unfühlend / ist die Natur . . .

and

> Nur allein der Mensch / vermag das Unmögliche:
> Er unterscheidet, / wählet und richtet;
> er kann dem Augenblick / Dauer verleihen.
>
> (*Das Göttliche*).

What would be the response of such a spirit to the sort of evil fate that the ancient Greek poets brought upon their heroes, as in the story of the house of Atreus? Must we think of the Gods, as they did, as capable of laying a curse on a family and bringing unavoidable suffering on generation after generation (Iphigenie's *Parzenlied* puts this older view), or can moral evil and its toll of suffering be overcome? Goethe shows us an Iphigenia to whom he tried to give, in the final version, no words that would have not been fitting for a St. Agatha, as pictured by Raffaello at Bologna, and whom he had modelled in the first instance on the "angel" who "moderated his own hot blood, and brought order into the aimless course of his life" (*An Charlotte von Stein*). No matter if from what we otherwise know of Frau von Stein it is hard to recognize her in this priestess and sister who is all tenderness and goodness, for this is what his worshipping heart at one time saw in her, as the letters and poems prove. In the drama, a personality of this rare stamp first overcomes the barbarian in King Thoas and his Taurians, among whom she finds herself when Apollo has saved her from Agamemnon's sacrificial knife, and we can well believe in the power of such a queenly woman to inspire love and respect. Her "pure humanity" communicates itself to her brother, the matricide Orestes, pursued by the furies of conscience, and inspires in him that marvellous vision of Atreus and Thyestes, and all their hostile families, walking, their hate forgotten, among the Shades. Finally, and this is hardest to accept, she stakes all on an appeal to the King's humanity, to the unselfish element in his love for her, after overcoming the temptation to deceive him in order to secure for Orestes, Pylades and herself a safe

return to the Greece she longs to see. Her conscience bids her treat Thoas too as a man, not to do evil so that good may come of it and, without the help of any *dea ex machina* such as Euripides found necessary, she tells Thoas the truth and her trust is justified.

In Greek tragedy the worth of all that is good in life is only the more strongly affirmed the more brittle the human vessels are that exemplify it, and that seems to be the essence of the tragic, the feeling that the beautiful too must perish—"Auch das Schöne muss sterben". The "values" are there, and are intensely realized, but they have no firm hold on existence. For a Christian philosophy, on the other hand, the values are not manifested merely by the favour of fate, they are in a way guaranteed from destruction because there is a moral order in the universe. When Iphigenie appeals to the Gods to save her, and to save their image in her soul, she is praying for a confirmation, in this particular experience, of her conviction that her God is both all-powerful and good. This savours of eighteenth-century optimism, it is a little too like a tract on "Honesty is the best policy", and seemed to Goethe himself later "verteufelt human". We are more inclined to agree with Thoas, who says that even good deeds may have evil consequences. Yet we may accept this happy ending if we think of the play as a symbolic illustration of the reality of moral progress, of that *Humanität* which Herder traced in its growth from civilization to civilization, for there have been saints, and they have frequently had such an influence.[1] In the long run our values are self-maintaining, and if they are represented here as self-maintaining in the short run, that is because the length of a drama is necessarily limited. It is a mistake then to interpret *Iphigenie* as purely a confession or as a merely personal view of life. Like all the great works of the German classics, it rests on something broader than the personal, namely on the moral intuitions of "cultivated people" of that day, which were in the central western tradition, going back to Greco-Roman and Christian origins. Goethe saw Greece, as we realize now, through the eyes of Winckelmann. He read Greek in Weimar, he tells us, for the purpose of ablution and purification—"zur Abwaschung

[1] Cf. *Conversations with Eckermann*, April 1st, 1827.

und Reinigung", Greece was a Utopia to be longed for, and *Iphigenie*, as Rehm says, is a kind of Claude Lorrain picture. Goethe was conscious of his double debt, but, like Winckelmann, he thought that what was finest in Greek art and thought was simply the expression of humanity at its best, and that this in all ages has been recognizably the same sort of thing.

Torquato Tasso is a fit pendant to *Iphigenie*, almost equally remote from the everyday world, in the same classicistic form, a work for an *élite* of taste and feeling to ponder over, not for an audience of common citizens to enjoy. It deals with the relations of a great poet, at the height of his powers, with the society in which he lives, a small Italian court of the Renaissance. The possibilities of such a subject as a "confession" for Goethe are obvious. Tasso is another of Goethe's symbolic victims, immolated in his stead. He is what Goethe might have been if his attitude to experience at the Court of Weimar had been less open, if he had been concerned, as many of his modern critics would like him to have been, only with pure poetry, and not with the prose of road-making, recruiting and finance, and the aim of a total approach to life with which he made sense of this experience. Tasso is a convincing poet, one of the few poets in dramatic literature in whom we can see the creative process at work. The highly specialized talents of the poet, as pure poet, are best cultivated in tranquillity—"Es bildet ein Talent sich in der Stille"—but a poet too is a man and a citizen, and his character will suffer if he does not mix with men and play his part in society, he will fear and mistrust men through ignorance of them. This is what has happened to Tasso. He lives wholly for his art, he is all imagination and sensitive perception, but the preoccupation with his own and imagined emotions, one of the conditions of his greatness as a poet, has left him no opportunity to mature as a man among men. His patrons, the Duke of Ferrara and his sister the Princess, understand this, and desire nothing more than to make him, for his own good, more at home in the real world, from which he cannot be shielded for ever, but their well-meant efforts to bring him together with Antonio, who has all the qualities he lacks, fail lamentably, leading to the reverse of the

intended effect. He loses all sense of reality and self-control, and forgets himself so far as to take the Princess into his arms. What has happened in the play has not of itself unbalanced his mind—it has merely revealed and intensified a long-existing instability, one with which, Goethe makes us feel, any genuine poet is threatened. His theme is *le malheur d'être poète*, the occupational disease to which German poets, arch-romantics in an ill-adjusted society, seem to have been quite peculiarly subject.

"The Classic is the healthy", Goethe said, and this drama is part of his own struggle for health, for wholeness. He has not made it easy for us to realize his standpoint, and none of his works has been so variously interpreted. The modern reader, so often incurably romantic himself, fails to remember Goethe's objectivity, expects him, as a poet, to side with the poet, and rightly cannot find any character in the play who can be admired without reserve. Even the Princess, Tasso's idol and inspiration, is a rather anaemic figure after Iphigenie, one who "renounces" through physical weakness as much as through moral strength, a closer portrait, perhaps, of Goethe's model; the other Leonore is a lion-hunter, the Duke a colourless *honnête homme*, and Antonio is strong and sane indeed, but insensitive and lacking in the graces, a nobler version of the philistine merchant Werner who is opposed to Wilhelm in the *Lehrjahre*. It is quite true that these two plays have lost that flashing charm of the spontaneous which is so irresistible in the young Goethe, but to ask him to remain "naïve" for ever would be to ask him never to grow up. To compensate for this loss we have wisdom, in superbly flexible and harmonious verse. It was natural that Goethe should be disappointed with the cool reception accorded to these masterpieces, and after his experience in Italy should give his energies more and more to science and theatre-management, until through Schiller's understanding encouragement he was led to complete the magnificent fragments of *Wilhelm Meister* and *Faust*.

Every reader of *Faust* knows from the *Vorspiel auf dem Theater* that Goethe must have had an intimate knowledge of the professional theatre, so convincingly does he bring home to us all the elements that go to make a play successful on the stage and

the inevitable conflicts that arise between author, manager and actor. He had sometimes been all three in the early days, and by the time he wrote the *Vorspiel*, in 1797, he had been managing the newly-established Weimar Court Theatre for six years. Once a suitable building was again available, in the shape of the privately-built assembly rooms already referred to, it was not long before a professional theatre was again established in Weimar. In 1784 Bellomo's company from Dresden had been made the Court troupe, in the sense that it received a regular subsidy of 2,000 Thalers a year to play three times a week in Weimar during the main season, and at the spa of Lauchstedt during the summer, but the company remained under the management of its principal. All classes could attend the performances, but only members of the Court were the Duke's guests and all others had to pay for admission. The repertoire was that of the average professional German theatre of the time. Italian operettas were the great favourites, followed later by the operas of the young Mozart, of Gluck and Dittersdorf. Next came the crude imitations of *Götz*, the "Ritterdramen", and domestic dramas of everyday life. Perhaps once a month something better was attempted, Shakespeare in prose translation (following the lead given by Hamburg ten years earlier), Lessing's *Emilia Galotti* and *Minna*, Goethe's *Clavigo* and *Egmont*, and Schiller's early plays. Except for two or three good singers it was a very mediocre company, but we must remember that in those days such a troupe, small as it was, had to be extremely versatile and perform not only both operas and plays but also ballets. Growing dissatisfaction led in 1791 to the next step, the foundation of a regular Court Theatre, no longer run by a subsidized private principal, but at the entire risk and under the entire management of the Court.

Goethe took over the management rather unwillingly, having lost his earlier enthusiasm for the theatre and found his recent dramas badly received. He left all the financial side to Franz Kirms, a permanent official, and interfered little in the artistic management after two-thirds of the troupe had been replaced by new actors and a general policy decided upon. For the first performance the play chosen was Iffland's *Jäger*, a typical middle-class

comedy, and Iffland, Kotzebue, Schröder and similar authors continued to provide much of the repertoire. Operettas and "Singspiele" were still very popular, and about once a month some interesting novelty was attempted, such as, in the first year, Mozart's *Entführung*, Shakespeare's *King John*, and Goethe's new comedy *Der Grosskophta*, about Cagliostro and the affair of the diamond necklace, the first of several attempts of his to dramatize an aspect of the French Revolution. The play contained good scenes, but was unconvincing as a whole, and it enjoyed only a *succès d'estime*.

It was only after Iffland's visit in 1796 that Goethe really began to take an interest in the Court Theatre. There seemed a possibility of attracting the great Mannheim actor-manager to Weimar as producer, his own theatre having had to close down owing to the French occupation, but Berlin wanted him too and could offer far more. His acting gave the rather mediocre Weimar troupe a new ideal of character interpretation, and it confirmed Goethe in his already-expressed opinion that, to deserve the name of actor, a man must be able to play a character very different from his own. It became a maxim for Weimar actors to get outside their own skin. The tide was turning against the prevailing naturalism, which had itself begun as a reaction against the stiffness of tragedy in the grand style, but it is from the first performance of Schiller's *Wallensteins Lager* in 1798, in the enlarged and redecorated theatre, that we must date the best period of the Weimar theatre. Schiller gave up the Jena chair of history, took up residence in Weimar, and devoted all his time and energy to the drama and this particular theatre, for a time often conducting rehearsals himself. Now for the first time literature took the lead and compelled the stage to follow. A new heroic style of drama and acting was aimed at and, as in pre-Lessing days, it was found that the Germans had still much to learn from France, an important influence being what Wilhelm von Humboldt reported from Paris about the art of Talma. After twenty years or more of prose realism, it was only possible to bring actors into line by establishing a regular school for them. Young newcomers especially were taken in hand by Goethe himself, and in the *Regeln*

für Schauspieler we still possess the lectures which he gave to them.

The emphasis in this instruction was not on the natural but on conscious art. The actors had first to be taught to speak verse again, and to move and group themselves on the stage in such a way that they could always be clearly heard, but at the same time presented a pleasing appearance to the eye. "The stage is to be thought of as a picture without figures", they were told, "in which the actors themselves are the figures". They were to forget their earlier aim, of acting as if they were alone and unobserved, and were even urged to form the habit of grouping themselves picturesquely in private life. At rehearsals the stage was marked out in squares, and the producer might beat time like a conductor to regulate the tempo of speech and movement. The model obviously was French tragic acting, with its studied grace and its tradition of speaking verse with a musicality and variety of tone that made classical tragedy comparable with opera. To provide material for their actors to practise on, and incidentally to please the Court, Goethe and Schiller made new verse translations of French classics (Goethe's *Mahomet* and *Tancred;* Schiller's *Phèdre*). Even Shakespeare, in Schiller's adaptation, took on a classical air. The witches in Macbeth were transformed into shapely young girls, dressed by no means in rags, chanting songs of destiny—to remind the spectator of the Eumenides, while the porter sang hymns instead of making ribald jests—for it was no longer permissible to mingle the genres.

It is clear that in their enthusiasm Goethe and Schiller often went too far in their imitation of the Ancients. The statuesque style to which they accustomed their actors was tolerable only in the Weimar *ensemble*, and the actors had to modify it considerably if they wanted to please elsewhere. Goethe found it possible to train easy-going bohemians up to his exacting standard only by a rigid insistence on discipline, backed by his immense prestige, the power of the purse, and if necessary the authority of a quite undemocratic small State. For boxing the ears of an actress an actor was taken to the lock-up, and for absenting herself to play elsewhere without leave an actress was confined to her lodgings with a sentry outside. The public too had to observe due decorum.

When the extravagances of Friedrich Schlegel's pseudo-classical *Alarcos* were too much for them, Goethe silenced them in a moment by standing up in his box and commanding them in a voice of thunder not to laugh.

We should have quite a wrong idea of the Weimar theatre if we made too much of these ultimate sanctions, but it was very definitely a Court theatre. Its seating arrangements reflected the social structure of a small capital. The Court and professional classes (*Die Honoratioren*) occupied the balcony, a sort of dress-circle divided up into boxes, with that of the Duke in the centre. Tradespeople and students sat in the pit, at the back of which, under the ducal box, was a special box for Goethe, and the "common people", domestic servants and so on, occupied the gallery. There were about five hundred seats altogether. In the Prologue to *Wallensteins Lager*, written for the re-opening of the theatre after various improvements had been made, it is described as "Zum heitern Tempel ausgeschmückt", and there was indeed a modest dignity, befitting the neo-classical ideas of the time, in its "edle Säulenordnung" of painted wood, with Greek masks at the top of the pillars. It was to be a temple of culture, a widely diffused culture reflected in the pride felt by the whole town for its theatre. We hear of illiterate craftsmen who could quote long passages from Schiller, learnt in the theatre. The theatre and the town itself were so small too that there was a patriarchal intimacy about everything, which English visitors like Crabb Robinson found very charming. It was so "free and easy in its aspect", he says, that he often saw Goethe in the intervals chatting and giving cakes to children sitting on the low balustrade of his box, and Schiller leaning against the side of the ducal box in conversation with those within. Actors fittingly enjoyed a social esteem in Weimar that was not yet usual in most parts of Germany.

Naturally tastes differed considerably even in such a community, and allowance had to be made for these differences if about two-thirds of the running costs were to be met, as they had to be, from box-office receipts. So even at its apogee, between 1798 and 1805, big concessions had to be made to popular taste. Before and after this period they were still greater. Goethe's

final resignation from the management in 1817 was occasioned by the Duke's insistence on the performance of a piece in which a well-trained dog played an important part, and which Goethe considered unworthy of Weimar's traditions. But all along they had played far more domestic dramas and operettas than classical plays. There were three performances a week. On Tuesdays the theatre was an opera-house, preference being given naturally to light opera owing to the limited resources of the theatre in every respect. The orchestra, for instance, consisted at first of only six persons. On Saturdays it was a popular theatre, offering light fare by Iffland, Kotzebue, Schröder, Spiess, etc., to a delighted audience, which usually included a number of rather disorderly Jena students. On Thursdays only it was the Weimar theatre which made history, presenting a German or foreign classic in the grand style. But the three publics were not by any means totally distinct, for very often Schiller and Kotzebue for instance would share the programme, as at the first performance of *Wallensteins Lager*, which was preceded by *Die Corsen*. When the troupe played in Lauchstedt or other places in the summer the popular element in the repertoire was markedly predominant.

The great difficulty Goethe experienced in his sustained attempt to educate his audience was still the lack of a suitable repertoire. There were not enough German plays of literary merit, and the majority of those available were not entirely fitted for stage performance. As Professor Gundolf says, "There has always been something artificial and forced in our attempts to combine literature and the theatre. . . . None of our greatest dramas completely fits the stage frame. They are either too big or too small for it". Schiller's best work is an exception. Some of the Weimar performances of his plays must by all accounts have been completely satisfying. But that Goethe's dramas were rather for the study has already been seen. Accordingly, *Egmont*, in Schiller's drastic adaptation, was not acted till 1796, *Iphigenie*, also adapted by Schiller, not till 1802, *Tasso* and *Faust I* only after Schiller's death (in 1807 and 1829 respectively).

The only later play of Goethe that was written for immediate performance was *Die natürliche Tochter* (1803), planned as the first

part of a trilogy that would show a figure like a modern Iphigenia, an illegitimate princess of the royal blood in days of revolution whose very existence was a danger to those in power. Pure humanity was to be seen again contending with personal and national calamity. But however profound and dignified their lines often are, the "King", "Duke", "Secretary" and so forth remain shadowy forms, to which it is difficult to attach the symbolic value suggested by their generic names, since the background so clearly indicates the specific events of the French Revolution. It was asking too much even of a Weimar audience to accept this as an acted drama. After this disappointment Goethe wrote nothing more for the stage except occasional pieces like the "Festspiel", *Des Epimenides Erwachen*, celebrating the end of the wars, but this was rather a continuation of the series of Court masques which he still took pleasure in devising for special occasions and a chosen company, and like *Die natürliche Tochter* it spoke a language which only a few cultivated contemporaries could appreciate, while its classical apparatus left the ordinary reader cold. These works and a few others, like the fine fragment *Pandora*, grew alongside the second part of *Faust* in the poet's mind, and have similar high merits and similar limitations. Whatever his theatre experience may have taught Goethe about the dramatist's art, it is clear that one thing was lacking, without which his later works could never be dramas in the fullest sense—namely, community of feeling with his audience. He was still above all the "Dichter" of his *Vorspiel*, who cries:

> O sprich mir nicht von jener bunten Menge,
> Vor deren Anblick uns der Geist entflieht!

and his attitude to the theatre in the second half of his life is well summed up by Thomas Mann when, in *Lotte in Weimar*, he puts into the mouth of Goethe's son, August, the comment that in regard to the theatre Goethe was swayed by a strange alternation of zeal and indifference, of passion and disdain, that Goethe, in fact, was not a man of the theatre—"Es war und ist in ihm gegen das Theater ein sonderbarer Wechsel von Eifer und Gleichgültigkeit, von Passion und Geringschätzung—er ist kein Theatermensch".

A FEW months before Goethe died, he wrote about *Faust*: "The work is like the history of the world and men, in which the solution of every problem gives rise to a new problem which needs to be solved.[1] His remark illustrates the character of the composition of the work, for he found himself continually wrestling with the unforeseen implications of each section or fragment as it was completed. And not only he. In the four decades after the publication of *Faust, ein Fragment*, many writers tried to "complete" it; and even after the whole was published, there have been numerous "Third Parts" offered the world. *Faust*-criticism too shows a never-ending wrestling, from generation to generation, with different aspects and newly discovered implications.

The work challenges and entices, not only as the statement of a specific problem of human relationships, but as a symbol of human progress. Indeed, Goethe made the observation that it has the rare property of showing a human spirit that enjoys and suffers from all the essential experiences of mankind.[2] Works

[1] Letter to H. Meyer, July 20th, 1831.
[2] Goethe, *Werke*, Weimar, Bd. 41 (2), pp. 339–341.

for which such a claim is made rarely justify it; the claim is however, in this case, defensible in a high degree, and perhaps above all because Goethe's remark was not a statement of an intention, but a review of a work which had grown with him over many decades. He began *Faust* in 1773, at the age of twenty-four, as a highly lyrical expression of his own yearnings and frustrations; he completed *Part I* (published in 1808) in his vigorous middle age; and *Part II* slowly evolved throughout his maturity, to be completed in his old age a month or two before his death in 1832.

Nor does it merely reflect personal growth. In his autobiography and elsewhere Goethe emphasizes the contribution that his times made to his development—on several occasions he called himself a "collective being".[1] He had experience of public administration in the state of Weimar; he had observed the French Revolution and seen the vast transformations of society and thought that followed upon the Revolution. Brought up on Voltaire and fired by Rousseau, he had attentively and sympathetically studied the works of Byron and the French Romantics. In his old age he watched with keen interest the new upsurge of radical liberalism in the French Revolution of 1830. He appreciated as fully as any contemporary the vast upheaval which industrialization meant, and he took an active part in the foundation of a new interpretation of the world through the natural sciences. He explicitly stated that in completing *Faust* he sought to bring it up to the level of modern times.[2]

The fact that all this experience is focused in one work is responsible no doubt for the extreme formal complexity of *Faust;* but it gives it its quite peculiar significance. If we compare his early works with his later ones we find as a rule marked contrasts in theme and style; *Wilhelm Meister* in its completed form seems a direct opposite of *Werther*, *Iphigenie* the opposite of *Prometheus*. But in *Faust* Goethe was forced to link his early and late conceptions, and fuses them into a unity, even though the "clarity" towards which Faust strives is so different from the "murk and

[1] *Frédéric Soret*, ed. Houben (Leipzig, 1929, p. 630); cf. Goethe to Eckermann, May 12th, 1825.

[2] *Werke*, Weimar, *loc. cit.*

nist" of his beginnings. The contrasts within this unity are aspects of an organic development, in which what is most precious in the young Faust, his rapture, his longing for life, his readiness to face disaster, is preserved to the end. Goethe found it extremely difficult to recapture his early vision, as is shown by his remarks to Schiller in the seventeen-nineties, and to find its organic development, as we see from the evidence of his later sketches for the conclusion. But he was remarkably successful; and the work is as a result a worthy summing-up of his wisdom and experience.

THE THEME

It is not easy to define the theme of *Faust*, for it developed with Goethe; it can be most clearly described according to the form it took at different stages of his life—the *Urfaust* of *c.* 1776; *Part I* of 1808; and *Part II* of 1832.[1]

The hero of the folk-book *Faustus*, who revolted against the religious restraints on thought and morals, is the hero of the *Urfaust*. This Faust, discontented with traditional learning because it does not reveal to him the moving forces of life, and beating against the walls of his secluded, barren life, longs for experience. With the aid of the devil, Mephistopheles, he leaves his study, experiences the rapture of love for a simple burgher girl, Gretchen, is carried on by his passion to seduce her, to commit crimes and lead her to commit crimes, and in horror and despair cannot rescue her from execution.

The most important addition of *Part I* is the definition of the terms of Faust's pact with Mephistopheles. Here, as in the scene "Outside the Gate", we see that Faust gives his soul to the devil not in the hope that Mephisto can provide him with earthly satisfactions, but in utter despair, asking only that he will be permitted to pile experience on experience, disaster on disaster, until his end:

[1] There are of course many intermediate forms. The first published version was *Faust, ein Fragment*, 1790, an incomplete transitional stage. Act III of *Part II* (*Helena*) was begun in 1800. Two important sketches for the completion of *Part II* were written in 1816 and 1827 (*Paralipomena* 63 and 123, *Werke*, Weimar, Bd. 15 (2), pp. 173–7 and 198 ff).

Let us hurl ourselves into the torrent of time,
Into the revolutions of events.
Then let pleasure and distress,
Failure and success,
Alternate as they will:
Man must be doing, and never still.

Yet there is a new note towards the end of this scene. Through this process of never-ending emotive experience Faust hopes "to widen himself to be one with mankind"; and "to grasp with his mind the highest and the lowest". Tragic experience is no longer an end in itself; it has a purpose, that of breaking the barriers between Faust and mankind, and of leading to true knowledge, based not on mere intellectual labour, but on experience. The scene "Forest and Cave" indicates that his love for Gretchen has brought him nearer an understanding of nature; and the theme is made explicit in the "Prologue in Heaven", written *c.* 1800, in which God states that Faust's "errors" are a necessary consequence of his striving, and that he will ultimately be led into "clarity".

In *Part II* the subjective, emotive experiences of *Part I* are replaced by social experience and activity in wider social regions. Faust, with the help of Mephisto, becomes a magician at the medieval Emperor's court, and at the request of the pleasure-seeking Emperor and courtiers conjures up the shades of Helen and Paris. He falls passionately in love with Helen, and goes to the classical underworld to bring her back to life, as Hercules once sought Alcestis and Orpheus Eurydice. In Act III she returns to Sparta, and Faust lives with her in enchanted harmony. In Act IV he returns to the medieval world, restores the authority of the Emperor whose frivolity has almost lost him his crown, and wins in reward the sea-coast as a fief. Faust throws back the sea and grows rich and powerful, a lord of wide lands, a merchant and pirate. As he undertakes a further enterprise, the draining of marshes through which new expanses will be won for settlement, he expresses himself content with the vision of the results of his labours. The terms of his pact—or rather, wager—with Mephistopheles are fulfilled, and the latter waits to take his soul to Hell.

But angels intercede and carry Faust's soul to Heaven. The criminal, who from beginning to end has spread destruction and death around him, is saved.

THE DRAMATIC FORM

In its general outline the work has the form of a medieval morality, for in the Prologue and the Epilogue in Heaven it is asserted that Faust's progress and his soul are ultimately in God's hands. It has the great advantage over a morality, however, in that it was not conceived in order to illustrate a moral theme; on the contrary, it was only when the composition and conception were far advanced that Goethe, reflecting over what he had already written, could see the justification of Faust's character, and express it in this traditional religious form.[1] The form of the Aeschylean trilogies, particularly the *Oresteia*, is akin to that of *Faust*, for there too we see how a tragic, apparently unyielding conflict is led to a solution; but *Faust* is so complex that it can scarcely be discussed except as something unique.

Part I falls into two distinct masses, the early monologues of Faust and the action of the Gretchen tragedy. The scenes as far as "Auerbach's Cellar" are a development of the theme of Faust's opening monologue in Marlowe's *Faustus* and the German puppet play based on it; they form a whole somewhat akin to the "monodramas" popular in Goethe's youth. Mainly composed of soliloquies of Faust himself, the speaker is interrupted by the apparition of the Earth Spirit, by his assistant Wagner, by voices of spirits and the Easter Choir, by the merry crowd on Easter Day, and by Mephistopheles. But the theme remains constant throughout, and the characters which intervene are essentially aspects, one might even say emanations, of Faust's own soul. The inner conflict expressed in his opening words finds ever new dramatization in the figures which appear. It is the form of a symphony, with variations in which the main theme appears in entrancing freshness, solemn with the Earth Spirit, satirically platitudinous

[1] Goethe was, of course, outspokenly hostile to, and often contemptuous of, theology. The figures and conceptions of Christian redemption are used by him only as symbols of human judgment (see his remarks to Eckermann, June 6th, 1831).

with Wagner, transcendent with the Easter Choir, gay with the Easter crowd, mocking and sardonic with Mephisto, ending with parody in the discussion between Mephisto and the student. Our interest is not engrossed by these characters; they fulfil their function in throwing light on the character of Faust.

Gretchen's relationship with the figures of her environment, though expressed differently, is essentially the same. Again we do not ask what is to happen to these people. Martha, Lieschen, Valentine tell us enough in putting before us the moral background of Gretchen—even her mother plays a big part, though she does not appear at all. They all illustrate Gretchen's dilemma, represent that traditional morality which Gretchen unwittingly so gravely offends, but which she never consciously challenges. For them this morality is all the more unquestionable since they see it as a public observance—only Gretchen discovers that it is problematical, since for her it is a matter of inner belief and attitude. Thus the construction of *Part I* is highly subjective, emanating as it were from the inner nature of the two main characters.

The difference in form between the opening scenes and those of the Gretchen tragedy derives again from the difference between the two main characters. The highly intellectual, self-conscious Faust finds characteristic expression in the soliloquy, and even seems to soliloquize in his discussions with Gretchen. But she is a naïve, simple young girl; it is her tragedy that she is carried on unreflectingly by her love and trust. It would be the very negation of her character if she were able self-consciously to argue with herself or others about her situation. In fact, we do not find here a set plot at all; Gretchen never stops to "review the situation", to take a decision. The movement of the Gretchen tragedy is so rapid that it defies formulation at any given point. The scenes jump from moment to moment, until her fate is consummated. This has well been called a "balladesque" technique; it has no parallel in the history of the drama.

But Gretchen is not a dull-witted creature, carried away by her instincts. She is alert, active, lively and delicate in her perceptions; but her youth, her upbringing and her environment make her inarticulate. Her insight is more surmise than knowledge; and her

profound intuition is interpreted half-consciously, through her songs. We see the maturing of her personality in the obscure foreboding of "There was a King in Thule", the drastic ejaculations of "My rest is gone", the anguish of her prayer to the Virgin Mother, "Ah, incline", and the crazed "My mother, the whore". Through these songs or lyrical stanzas she can express herself; not through the more articulate and rational soliloquy or discussion. When she is with Faust, they talk on different levels. His sombre or rapturous tones blend strangely with her naïve chatter or questionings, forming the unity of a fugue rather than of a harmony, held together only by their love, the precariousness of which emerges only too tragically from the difference of voice.

The form of *Part II*, though infinitely more varied, is much more rational and clear. It is divided into Acts, and as Goethe said, each Act "gets a character of its own, so that, a little world in itself, it does not touch the rest and is linked to the whole only by slender references to what precedes and follows."[1] The figures of the real or mythical world each have their own mode of expression, so that there is an extraordinary mixture of verse-forms. Act III, which begins with Helen arriving in Sparta and concludes with a symbol of the death of Byron, opens like a Greek tragedy in hexameters, and concludes with the musical stanzas of modern lyric poetry. To indicate his satire of the effeteness of the Empire Goethe uses, at the end of Act IV, stiff and wooden Alexandrines; and for the last scene, in Heaven, he uses a succession of songs rhyming most opulently and composed of a vocabulary which has scarcely anything material and precise about it. In contrast to the breathless movement of *Part I*, the "masses" of the different Acts and *dramatis personae* of *Part II* are so clearly defined and independent that very careful attention is required to detect its dramatic movement.[2]

[1] To Eckermann, Feb. 13th, 1831.

[2] "The First Part is almost entirely subjective. It all issues from a more confused, more passionate individual, and this twilight may well be the reason why it appeals to men so much. But in the Second Part there is scarcely anything subjective, here there appears a higher, broader, brighter, less passionate world, and those who have not knocked about a bit and experienced something won't be able to make much of it" (Goethe to Eckermann, Feb. 17th, 1831).

THE DRAMATIC DIALECTIC

I have called the minor characters of *Part I* "emanations" of Faust and Gretchen. It might easily be thought that they are, therefore, thin and vague as characters; and that, as in many modern lyrical dramas, there is little dramatic tension. In fact, Goethe's artistry is such that, little as these characters appear, they have an amazing plasticity, the vigorous and blunt reality of sixteenth-century portraits of the common people; and, while the tension of the First Part is essentially spiritual, it is made most dramatic through these figures. Nowhere is this so evident as in the figure of Mephistopheles, who, after the first two scenes, plays as big a part as Faust and, in most productions of the play, has all the plums.

Mephisto appears as a character as early as the "Prologue in Heaven". He is no simple, abstract devil, but a complex personality, with much of the character of Goethe's early mentor and friend, Merck.[1] Here he is both devil and servant of God; he works evil on men, yet is full of contempt for them, and humorously commiserates with himself upon the pettiness and facility of his work. When he first appears before Faust, quitting the form of a poodle, he emphasizes with the cynicism of a man of the world the fruitlessness of his labours. He seeks evil, and the results are ultimately good; he seduces men, and ever new healthy generations are born; he destroys, and destruction simply gives rise to fresh life. Yet, in all this the opposite of Faust, he is Faust's very self, the complement to Faust, his necessary completion. For Faust, seeking good, produces evil; seeking more intense life, spreads destruction; an idealist, provides an object-lesson for the cynic. And Mephisto, in his shrewd realism and scepticism, is the only character whom Faust can esteem as being on his own intellectual level.

Despite the magic tricks that Mephisto delights in—the conjuring of wine from the table, the rejuvenation of Faust, his mastery over spirits, the provision of hidden treature, etc.—he is

[1] Goethe often referred to Merck as Mephistopheles-Merck: "Merck and I stood to one another like Faust and Mephistopheles" (To Eckermann, March 27th, 1831).

entirely human. The failure of his first attempt at winning Gretchen through a present provokes him to a witty burlesque of the intervention of the priest in which, like a true man, he gets rid of some of his rage through invective, slander, and wit. He thoroughly enjoys befooling Martha through his fantasy on the death of her husband, and leading her to believe she may win him for a second husband. He delights in planting the seeds of seduction in Gretchen, at the same time as he has a tender word for her innocence. But these are small fry. It is Faust's soul he is after; this is a task worthy of him, and one which gives him much trouble.

The philosophical world against which Faust revolts is one which defines an absolute antagonism between man and nature, soul and intellect, spirit and sense, contemplation and action; its practical form is the contrast between the study and the wide world. Faust seeks through experience to get to the single core of the world, to overcome this dichotomy through self-identification with nature. He is tortured as long as he feels these "two souls" warring in his breast; as long as it appears that there is a choice only between Wagner and Mephistopheles, one of whom is satisfied with spiritual joys, the other proposing sensual pleasures (Gretchen has a parallel choice between her mother's outlook and Martha's).

Mephisto understands this conflict perfectly well, and indeed defines for the student the same choice. It is significant that he appears, in the form of the poodle, as if in direct response to Faust's speech about the two souls. But the dramatic tension within Faust, and of *Part I* as a whole, does not arise from this struggle, as it does in Marlowe's *Faustus*, where the devil merely represents the secular intellect and carnal desire. The struggle here is between Faust's search for intense experience, the single source of thought, action, life, and Mephisto s view that sense-experience is the only alternative to barren intellectualism and moral conformism. In his translation of St. John's Gospel Faust rejects the idealistic "In the Beginning was the Word"; he rejects "In the Beginning was Sense"—"Is it the Sense that drives and creates?"—and asserts "In the Beginning was the Deed". Sense activity is

necessary to this unity he seeks, but only as a part of a whole. Thus Mephisto is necessary, the key to the world of activity, but only as a means to an end which Mephisto is far from understanding, and which Faust himself only dimly perceives. In this misunderstanding, this confusion, this conflict, lies the tragic tension in *Part I.*

The tension is tragic because of the essential incompatibility of desire and fulfilment, and Faust repeatedly despairs of achieving his object. Mephisto welcomes this despair, and mocks at him in order to deepen it, thinking thus to drive him to believe in sensual satisfaction. Faust cannot widen his nature, cannot be more than he is; but by acquiring things he can do as well—buy a team of six horses, cries Mephisto shrewdly enough, and there you are, trotting about like a regular lord, as if you had four-and-twenty legs. But Faust welcomes sensual experience, the breaking of the rigid frontiers of his existence, not with the hope of gratification. In terrible speeches he curses all the hopes with which men delude themselves. All he wants is perpetual activity and experience, without expectation of satisfaction or rest—"Show me the fruit that rots before it's picked". So opposed are Faust and Mephistopheles that they cannot make a pact. They challenge one another in a highly dramatic wager.

The tension between the two appears everywhere, and especially in the Gretchen affair. Faust desires her and plans her seduction. But he comes to love her, to venerate her simplicity, her naturalness. He is tortured by this contradiction, but cannot desist, for renunciation would throw him back into the barrenness of his study. For Mephisto the seduction is the reality, the love is delusion. And who is in the right? When Faust is indignant that he is to bear false witness, Mephisto asks him, won't he be swearing to love Gretchen for ever, and is that not a worse falsehood? And Faust, half-raving, admits it—for there is a "must" within him he cannot deny. This is *his* tragedy within the Gretchen tragedy. His "sacred" feelings, his "eternal" love, consume themselves and turn to dust.

The same conflict is evident in Faust's attitude to religion. He turns with disgust from theology, he has no belief. Yet he

rejoices in the Easter revelling of the people, because here the re-birth of Spring is identical with the re-birth of Christ, because here experience and faith coincide:

> They celebrate the resurrection of the Lord,
> For they themselves are risen again.

To Gretchen he defines his religion as worship of all that deeply stirs man—"Feeling is all"; and he differs from her as much as he would from Mephisto, for to her religion is creed, observance, and traditional morality. But he respects her belief quite sincerely, as he does that of the peasants, because it is the expression of her whole being; and he recognizes the perfidy of Mephisto's suggestion that her anxiety for Faust's soul arises from her desire to get him under her thumb.

It is a characteristic of dialectic that neither side is final and right; that the right, itself temporary, issues out of the swaying struggle between the two opposites. This forms the peculiar fascination of *Part I* (in *Part II* it appears in a different form, which is discussed later). Mephisto's shrewd comments often strike home, both he and Faust express part of the truth; all we can do is to accept the necessity of the torrential movement of the action, and, like Faust himself, affirm it, good and bad together:

> What must come to pass, let it be soon!
> Let her fate come crashing down on me,
> And she with me go to one doom!

If the two-sidedness of being appears consciously in Faust's relations with Mephisto, it appears as clearly, but unconsciously, in Gretchen. Her tragedy has its roots in the small frictions between personal desire and social duty natural in a girl just emerging into womanhood; but till Faust comes there is no threat to her serenity. She rebels a little against her daily tasks, her mother's authority, but finds joy in work and submission. Her family duties, which Faust idealizes, make her hands chapped, tire her; but they make her sleep and eat well. She resorts to her indulgent neighbour, Martha, as a welcome relief from the severity of her

mother; but she is young enough to see only what is good in Martha. She knows she ought not to receive presents, but also she knows how delightful they are, and how much better she looks in jewels. She rejects Faust's first approach, but is a little flattered by it.

She has reached the age when the woman in her is awakening, and when it is quite natural and good that she should make her own home. So, when she feels Faust's love, she is ready to cleave to him as naturally as formerly she had belonged to her family. She is completely unaware that there can be conflict between instinct and right; when Faust proposes to visit her room, she is only anxious that her mother should not know. Only when Lieschen, at the well, vindictively rejoices in the misfortune of another girl, who is bearing an illegitimate child, does she realize how her love offends morality; it is a contradiction she cannot understand or master:

> And all that drove me to it,
> Ah God! was so good! Alas, was so dear!

We see how this contradiction brings this child and mother to ruin her own family. She follows her instincts because they are good; but, once she reflects, her conscience fully affirms the condemnation of her behaviour uttered so harshly by Lieschen and her brother. This unresolved conflict unhinges her mind, and she kills her child; far from rescuing her, this act only drives her further into the morass. And when Faust comes to carry her from prison, in the few moments when her reason clears she fully accepts the judgment of the law and throws herself on the mercy of God. Gretchen's last request to Faust is that she should be buried near her family, i.e., reconciled with them in death. To the very end the dramatic struggle between the opposites, between nature and morality, remains tense; we can never relax comfortably with the feeling, this or that is right.[1]

[1] It has often been considered paradoxical that the author of the Gretchen tragedy should, as a minister in Weimar, have upheld the law which condemned infanticides to execution. But there is no suggestion in *Faust* that Gretchen's execution is morally wrong.

This dialectic is an essential constituent of the conclusion of *Part II*. In a remark to Eckermann Goethe speaks of Faust's activity growing "more and more lofty and pure",[1] and earlier commentators, who saw the aged Faust as a humanitarian, often asserted that he loses the evil characteristics which have always sullied his actions. But the Faust of Act V is as ruthless and destructive as ever. His greed for land and power leads him to destroy Philemon and Baucis, and for his last enterprise he urges Mephisto to use any methods to get labourers. His last speeches are as violent as any. He expresses the wish to get rid of magic and use purely human means, but he still uses Mephisto for the draining of the swamp, still puts himself at the mercy of forces whose mode of operation he cannot control. Goethe does not allow us the illusion of a "happy end"; vigorous life, if it is constructive, must be destructive. At the end, magic is something indissolubly bound up with human action, it is the contradiction inherent in all achievement, the symbol of the powers which man unwittingly lets loose.[2]

Thus the conclusion of *Faust* is characteristically oscillating, tantalizing. Faust is content with the surmise of his achievement, not with its fulfilment, for it will never be fulfilled. And even Goethe's summing-up, expressed through the angelic choirs, asserts not that Faust has earned salvation, but that he *may* be redeemed, on the intercession of the saints who signify love and pity. It is as if he were to say, a large amount of indulgence is required if the ways of man are to be considered good.

THE SOCIAL PROCESS

It would have been curious if this play, which is explicitly a symbol of human progress, had borne no reference to social questions. In the course of his life Goethe saw gigantic political upheavals, and—perhaps of even deeper import—the marked beginnings of the transformation of society through the machine.

[1] June 6th, 1831.

[2] The significance of magic in this connection has been well discussed in G. Lukàcs, *Goethe und seine Zeit* (Bern, 1947).

His later works, and the observations recorded by his acquaintance, show that he was keenly attentive to social and political events. The difficulty in summing up his social attitude arises from the fact that he remained strongly averse from the principles of democratic politics (the exertion of pressure on governments by classes or groups of citizens), but recognized the necessity for social change and encouraged the authorities to initiate it. "A liberal in theory, in practice he supports the opposite view", said the liberal Soret in some vexation.[1]

In *Part I* of *Faust* there is scarcely any reference to political affairs. The action occurs in the restricted sphere of domestic burgher life without reference to any wider social structure. Indeed the moral satire which is evident in the treatment of Wagner, Martha, Lieschen, and Valentine is not of the kind which suggests any need or possibility of reform; it is rather of that humorous, tolerant character typical of the early Goethe, who found the variety and contradictions of life diverting, or tragic, but who was not thereby provoked to the moral indignation that inspires the social reformer such as Schiller. In *Part II* however there is a whole mass of social satire, and this satire is directed against rigid, outworn social forms.

The "great world" into which Faust enters is that of the feudal Empire; and Goethe shows how the feudal nobility digs its own grave. The young Emperor has, in Goethe's own words, "all the qualities needed to lose his land".[2] He seeks pleasure, and avoids business and unpleasant facts. His chief officers of state complain about the prevalence of anarchy, crime, mutiny, financial disorder; Mephisto suggests that a large issue of paper-money, on the security of the untapped treasures beneath the soil, will solve all their difficulties. The officers (except for the ecclesiastic who is Chancellor, who fears a scheme based on "nature and intelligence") welcome the idea without scruple, and the Emperor signs the order in the midst of Carnival. The exploitation of the hidden wealth is left to Mephisto, who of course does nothing about it. All the courtiers use their increased cash to.

[1] Ed. Houben, p. 466.
[2] To Eckermann, Oct. 1st, 1827.

redouble their follies; the Court is seriously concerned only with the Carnival celebrations.

In Act IV we see the result of this irresponsibility. Bad government and inflation have produced civil war, and the Emperor has been abandoned by many of his chief barons. He is rescued only by the infernal arts of Mephisto, acting in Faust's interest. To reward his faithful vassals the Emperor gives them large grants of territory; and to the Church he gives far-reaching rights—as if to emphasize the absurdity of his actions, the Chancellor returns to the stage three times with further demands for the Church, like a clown. It was not Goethe's intention to show his Emperor to be a foolish or ignoble man; what we see is the dilemma of a feudal ruler, who can reward loyalty only by granting powers and rights which are the basis of permanent anarchy.

But one gift the Emperor makes is significant and breaks the husk of feudalism like a seed breaking its case. Faust receives the sea-coast and proceeds to develop the regained land, to increase production, to trade. In Act V the feudal world has disappeared completely. Faust's domains seem co-extensive with the world, he is *entrepreneur* and ruler in one, no Church and no Emperor restrain him. It is the bourgeois world of free enterprise, of capitalism; no authority or power, political or moral, checks it. It is a world comparable to the America which beckoned to the emigrants of *Wilhelm Meisters Wanderjahre:* as one of them says, "We longed for regions where what would here (in Europe) be a crime would be reckoned a duty and a right". The freedom which Faust so stresses in his last speech is the power of man to exploit nature, free of the encumberment of idlers, of feudal restrictions, of traditional practices and morals.

In his last years Goethe was an avid reader of the French newspapers, *Le Temps* and *Le Globe*, the organs of moderate and radical liberal opinion, and frequently discussed their more or less radical proposals on the need to replace an idle nobility by the efficient middle class.[1] Here in Acts IV and V of *Faust*, the last parts of the

[1] There are continual references in *Soret*, cf. "I was almost the slave of *Le Globe* and quite obsessed by the conflict of political opinion" (1830. *Soret*, ed. Houben, p. 414). On the need to prefer capacity to rank, see Goethe's remarks to Eckermann, March 11th, 1828.

work to be written, we see that Goethe's interest in these views arose from a profound appreciation of the productive forces unleashed by the middle class. But, in marked contrast to the spokesmen of the middle class from Adam Smith onwards, Goethe's attitude is very unsentimental—perhaps because his personal sympathies went rather towards the nobility. Faust's achievement is marked by ruthless destruction. The idyllic circumstances and religion of feudalism, as represented in Philemon and Baucis, are brutally destroyed; Faust's trade is not distinguishable from piracy. Faust's final scheme, the draining of the marshes, is no charitable undertaking, inspired by love of his fellow-men; it is an enterprise that attracts him because of its boldness, its grandeur. He is never moved by love of others. But the good of others arises as it were accidentally from his activity which increases the productivity of the world, creates new areas of settlement, makes it possible for millions to work and live. The world of Faust is not intrinsically better, more moral, than the feudal world he disrupts; but it is creative, productive, and displaces the old as an organic necessity. The destruction he causes is not the useless destruction of the Emperor's civil war; it is the destruction which all creative activity always entails.[1]

Just as Goethe repudiated the political action of the French middle class in 1830, so in *Faust* there is silence on the political means by which Faust wins independence and on the political implications of his rule. It is characteristic of Goethe that the old order destroys itself; the new comes imperceptibly, it is suddenly there. This is how he would have it in *Wilhelm Meister*, where

[1] It is characteristic of Goethe that, with all his own inclination to utilitarianism, he was repelled by Jeremy Bentham's ideal of service to the greatest good of the greatest number. He once cried out: "I don't understand why one should sacrifice the interest of the individual to that of the mass. I maintain that everyone should remain what he is, should work and produce according to his inner conviction. As a writer I have never had the interest of the mass in mind, I only sought to tell the truth, to write what I was convinced of and what I considered good: and thereby the welfare of the others was furthered, without this being my main objective." (*Soret*, ed. Houben, p. 474). There is a characteristic liberal dogma here, hidden in persuasive terms—it is Adam Smith's belief that private interest and public interest are ultimately identical; and there is the same element of Utopianism in Faust's last speech.

the old order freely abdicates, for the best of the nobility combine with the best of the middle class to found a new order, based on work and ability.

Goethe was conscious of his challenge to political liberalism; he was perhaps unconscious, like the majority of early liberals, of the problematical character of the liberty to which Faust had won. For Faust, in his last speech, appears as a tyrant, his workers and settlers are his subjects. It was only in the two decades following Goethe's death that the further social and political problems arising from the victory of middle-class enterprise became explicit in the form of the socialist and communist movement and theory; in this respect the work is indeed "like history, in which the solution of every problem gives rise to a new problem which needs to be solved". It is characteristic that the Russian socialist Lunacharski, in his *Faust and the City* (1916), takes the Faust myth further to the point where Faust initiates the socialist commonwealth. And he can do this because Goethe's grasp of human progress is so realistic, so unsentimental, so unprejudiced, that his symbol, Faust, still has unlimited possibilities of further development, beyond the vision of Goethe's own time.

HELEN

The union of Faust and Helen forms Act III of the Second Part of *Faust*. It was the first section of the Second Part to be begun (in 1800), and was the first Act to be completed. It was published separately in 1827 under the title:

Helena
Classical-Romantic Phantasmagoria
Interlude to Faust.

Its setting extends from ancient Sparta, through medieval feudalism, to an idyllic Arcady, and the death of Byron is indicated at the end. We are, indeed, here in a world different from the rest of *Part II*, unrealistic as that is. Goethe's term "phantasmagoria" means "shadow-play", a play in which we see, not actors of flesh and blood, but their shadows on a screen. In a

sketch of 1816, a note for a continuation of *Dichtung und Wahrheit*, Goethe speaks of its "half-realities".[1]

Yet Goethe was concerned, in completing *Part II*, to remove from this Act the character of an "interlude", to show the function of this experience of Faust's in the total development of his life. He wrote to Zelter that he wished to link it with the rest so that it might appear "no longer phantasmagorical and interpolated, but in an aesthetically rational sequence."[2] It was unlikely that its phantasmagorical, highly symbolical character could be altered by the character of the preceding and succeeding Acts; but Goethe was successful in removing from it the appearance of a mere interlude, and in giving it a dramatic function.

"Classical" and "Romantic" may be taken, of course, as definitions of the culture of ancient Greece and medieval Europe; but Goethe is primarily concerned with the terms as definitions of alternative outlooks on the world, a synthesis of which he proposes. We can therefore leave on one side the question of the interpretation of historical cultures, and concentrate on the character and behaviour of the two protagonists.

Helen appears before her ancient home in Sparta to prepare a sacrifice in honour of Menelaus' homecoming. Her own fate is uncertain, yet she undertakes her duties in a spirit of submission to unavoidable necessity. When she accepts Phorkyas' offer of a refuge with Faust, she does so again with serenity; for her simple dignity is due not to passive humility but to clarity and realism. And when she meets Faust and their voices mingle, this is the message she brings: respect for the existing moment, for reality, conquest of yearning and brooding. As Faust cries:

> Do not brood over this rare destiny!
> Even if only for a moment, it is our duty to be!

Inspired by her presence, Faust shows himself a man of action, a warrior, and overcomes his foes.

We are prepared for this transformation of Faust by his reaction to the apparition of Helen in Act I. As he introduces her to the

[1] Paralipomenon 63, *Werke*, Weimar, Bd. 15 (2), pp. 173–7.
[2] To Zelter, Jan. 24th, 1828.

Court, his passionate words tell us that her beauty brings him to a new attitude to the world:

> How void was the world, an unsolved riddle!
> What is it now since I became a priest?
> For the first time well-founded, lasting, desirable!

And a little later:

> Here I find firm footing! Here are realities
> Where the mind may grapple with minds.

That is, her beauty turns him to appreciation of the real world, to desire to work within the real world. In the year in which he finished the Helen Act, 1826, Goethe put the same idea in different words: "They are always talking about the study of the Ancients. Yet what does this mean but: turn to the real world and seek to express it; for that was what the Ancients did when they were alive".[1]

For Goethe, classical beauty dwells entirely within the world of sense-perceptions, it welds the ideal and the real. When expressed through the human body, it represents perfect grace, the harmony of purpose and technique, ends and means, free of the distortions caused by frustration or yearning. But, in its sensuous perfection and self-sufficiency, it is, as Schiller emphasized, an image of the achievement man should attain in the moral sphere, of the reconciliation of self and external reality. Thus it is that Faust's union with Helen occurs in a "phantasmagorical" realm, a realm symbolical of a purely spiritual experience; but its meaning for Faust only becomes explicit when he returns to the real world, when this experience comes to fruition in practice.

The vision of Helen fades, and Faust returns to the medieval world in the midst of mountains, fit symbols of his new plans. Mephisto comes along, jeering as usual, and suggesting that Faust is craving for new, monstrous experience; but Faust cries:

> Not at all! there is a field
> For great deeds within this earth.
> Amazing things shall come to birth,
> To boldest efforts my heart is steeled.

[1] To Eckermann, January 29th, 1826.

And, as Mephisto sneeringly suggests that he is in love with fame, he continues:

> I win mastery, property!
> The deed is all, fame is nought.

And he tells Mephisto of his plan to drive back the sea.

This is the direct outcome of the experience with Helen. Faust has the same insatiable egoism as before, he has not learnt balance, harmony, self-restriction. What was his most precious quality, his dissatisfaction, is ruling him as ever, for he is enticed above all by the grandeur and difficulty of the task he sets himself. But he has found an object, an external activity, into which to pour his energies; they are to be realized in an enterprise, so that his inner tumult will find release in objective form. Through the acquisition of property, and its practical, economic development, Faust is to find a mould in which his personality can take shape, in which he can acquire reality.[1]

It seems at first sight surprising that the experience of classical beauty should issue in so "mundane" a result. It has indeed been a weakness of *Faust*-criticism to deal with the Helen experience as something of purely private, aesthetic importance, which does not impinge on Faust's external life. It is true that for a few years of his life (between 1790 and 1805) Goethe does in some of his more formal works seem to seek a type of aesthetic experience as a compensation for the ugliness and pettiness of actual life—e.g. in *Pandora;* but even this is only appearance, and his deepest concern is always, as Professor Barker Fairley has recently expounded,[2] the fructification of aesthetic experience in practical activity. So it is with the Helen experience for Faust; and, radiant as that experience is, it finds a worthy outcome and counterpart in Faust's abandonment of confused and restless

[1] So Hegel also asserts that property is the "first embodiment" of freedom and true personality (Hegel, *Philosophy of Right*, trans. T. M. Knox, 1942, pp. 40–42.) We might say, using Hegel's terms, that property is, for Mephisto, merely the means of satisfying need; while for Faust it is the embodiment of free will and the realization of personality.

[2] B. Fairley, *A Study of Goethe* (Clarendon Press: Oxford, 1947).

feeling, in his new devotion to the real world through the conquest and development of property, the free and unencumbered exploitation of which is the distinguishing characteristic of the nineteenth century.

FAUST AS TOTALITY

In his great novel, *Wilhelm Meister*, Goethe depicts the development of a man from subjective ideals to practical activity. But with deliberate irony he shows how the wisdom which Meister acquires cannot be passed on by teaching; for, as he reaches fulfilment, his son, escaping disaster by a hair's breadth, has to begin his moral education from the beginning. In *Faust* we are much more keenly aware that here is no exposition of a moral attitude and activity that everyone ought to adopt ready made, but the definition of what mankind is. Faust is justified not merely by the nature of his final activity, but by the whole character of his experiences and striving. He is, whether we take him as person or symbol, a totality.

Goethe is often admired for what is called his "universality". But there were better scientists at that time, with a surer grasp of scientific method; there were many statesmen with a deeper knowledge of public affairs and with greater pertinacity; his analysis of society is less precise than Adam Smith's and less profound than Hegel's. Goethe's greatest achievement is the synthesis he achieved between the inner world of feeling and imagination and the outer world of nature and society, the marriage between full personal development and social action. Of this synthesis *Faust* is his chief poetic symbol.

There is for Faust no short cut to wisdom. At the beginning of the play he is aware of the unavailingness of learning; but also his direct appeal to the Earth Spirit, his belief that by a mere change of interpretation of the world he can become identical with the vital process, is vain. He has to pass through all the common experiences of man before he can be fully a man. The theme recurs in the Homunculus variation. This pure intelligence, encased in a flask, seeks to come to real life, to win a body; and the only method is the evolutionary one. He merges in the sea, beginning

as the most primitive form of living matter; as Thales observes to him:

> There you'll move according to eternal norms,
> Through thousands and thousands of forms,
> And you'll have plenty of time to become a man.

So Faust moves through the passion-charged but close atmosphere of the "little world", and then through the "great world" of government, before he can find adequate expression of his own personality. And at both levels he is urged forward, at the decisive moment, by the essentially personal experience of love.

In this, again, Homunculus provides an exact parallel to Faust; for Homunculus is brought to merge with the sea only by his mad passion for Galatea, against whose shell his flask is shattered. Faust twice breaks the husk of his old personality through his love for Gretchen and Helen. It is love that makes him a new man, makes him surpass himself, enter regions of experience and action he had not before imagined.[1]

In this great drama we have, as in the *Oresteia*, a problem which is propounded on the individual plane, but which finds its solution on the social plane, in social activity. But the end includes the means. It is only through his inner impulses that Faust moves forward; and in particular through the individual experience of love. The work does not conclude merely with a definition of an ideal form of activity; nor on the other hand does it present us with an ideal type of moral personality. In this final achievement of Faust we see, not a correction of past errors, but the summing-up of all that he has been. At the beginning of *Part I* the purpose of his striving had hovered before his mind in the form of emotive experience, of self-identification with Nature; but his surrender to emotion, rich though it was in its result, had involved him in disaster. In *Part II* he learns, in Hegel's term, to "alienate" himself, to lose himself in activity in order truly to find himself. And in this activity all the energies which have been awakened in him,

[1] So, in the *Urworte. Orphisch*, Goethe includes love among the determinants of human character, with innate character, the influence of society, necessity, and hope.

spiritual longing and sensual lust, love and art, ambition and greed, can find real, objective expression, are truly embodied.

In its totality *Faust* illustrates, therefore, the dominant characteristic of Goethe's thought, which has been so aptly defined by Professor Willoughby. Faust is both a unique personality, with his specific motivations, and a type; he is a unity, and yet a series of changes. Like any natural phenomenon, his character is "not just the shape we see before us; it is the whole cycle from its seeding to its fading".[1] And the truth of this interpretation is as profound whether we take Faust merely as the hero of Goethe's play, or as the symbol of humanity.

[1] L. A. Willoughby, *Unity and Continuity in Goethe* (Taylorian Lecture, Clarendon Press, Oxford. 1947, p. 5).

GOETHE AS THINKER

by Humphry Trevelyan

GOETHE was not a logical thinker. He said himself that he had no faculty for philosophy. He could not build logical systems out of concepts and words. Very early he had learnt to distrust words when they are used as absolutes or chess pieces to take the place of sense:

> Denn eben wo Begriffe fehlen,
> Da stellt ein Wort zur rechten Zeit sich ein.

And throughout his scientific works he warned his readers to think not in words, or even concepts (*Begriffe*), but in things, with mental images (*Anschauungen*), not abstractions. His thinking at its best was a thinking in objects.

It was, moreover, dynamic thinking. In his lifelong quest for the secrets of nature and life he was not primarily concerned with what things are, but with how they come to be what they are. The forces at work, not the finished products, were what enthralled him. For this reason, like Wordsworth, he distrusted "that false secondary power" which classifies, analyses and anatomizes, and strove always to see the living totality.

And in this search for the creative forces he was guided by an

intuitive belief in the oneness of all life—"the macrocosm in the microcosm". He sought, and thought he found, a few great simple tendencies, dynamic patterns, which produced all the multiplicity of phenomena and which could be traced as much in the world of human morals and emotions as in the physical world.

Because his thought was both so concrete and so dynamic, he did release into the stream of European consciousness some ideas which have developed and worked and are very much with us to-day; whereas his philosopher contemporaries with their static abstractions—their thing-in-itself, their duty and inclination, reason and understanding, their ego and non-ego—seem now merely to have been chewing over again the well-chewed gum of abstract speculation and ethics and to have left men not much wiser nor more capable of meeting the dark potentialities of life than they had been in the days of Plato or of Paul. Goethe revealed some aspects of the nature of life which till his day had been overlooked or wrongly interpreted. He showed men new, even strange and dangerous, truth. If they have used that truth to compass their own destruction, is the seer to blame?

Four ideas of Goethe's have proved especially vital: *Morphologie*, the study of the principles of change in the forms of life, which helped to clear the road for the doctrine of evolution; then his conception of the forms of life as products of conflict between polar opposites—*Polarität und Steigerung*; thirdly *das Dämonische*, that fearful and mysterious power which drives men in spite of themselves sometimes to high achievement, sometimes to utter destruction; and finally the philosophy of *Stirb und Werde*, of dying in order to live, of the moth and the candle-flame, or, under another aspect, of the *höchster Augenblick*, the moment of intensest living to win which all common joys, all human values, are sacrificed.

These four ideas seem to me to be those through which Goethe's thought has had the most effect on the thought of men in the last hundred and fifty years. They have little in common with the great body of his teaching, with the wise humanity of *Iphigenie*, of *Tasso* and of *Hermann und Dorothea*, with the serene doctrine of *Entsagung*, self-denial, which dominates much of the poetry of his

later years, or with his passionate desire to teach people to live a good and useful life in the framework of society, which found expression especially in the two parts of *Wilhelm Meister*. But it is not hard, though here outside my subject, to trace the ever-widening effects of the dynamic and dangerous elements in Goethe's thought through the Romantic philosophers to Wagner and Nietzsche and so to the Nazis.

I have said that Goethe was not capable of creating a logical philosophic system. He was incapable even of reading and digesting the systems of others. Leibniz, Spinoza and Kant all affected his thought, but he was never a Spinozist or a Kantian; he did not accept either of these systems, or any other, as a whole and make it the basis of his own thinking. He picked out an idea here and there which he came across in rather haphazard reading —from Leibniz the monad; from Spinoza his pantheism and the realization that a man who loves God must not expect God to love him in return; and from Kant the rejection of teleology and the moral yardstick in Art as in Nature—and he did not trouble himself about the logical proof of the idea which interested him, nor about the steps which followed from it, but took these thoughts because they suited him and worked them into the complex weave of his own emotions and beliefs. He felt that the logical proofs of philosophers are only rationalizations of intuitive beliefs and that people—even philosophers—only believe what they want to, what suits them at the moment. "All beliefs about things", he said to a friend in 1806, "are part of the individual. We know only too well that conviction does not depend on our seeing a thing to be true, but on our will. No one grasps a thing unless it suits him and he is therefore ready to admit it. Prejudice decides in knowledge as in action, and prejudice, as its name implies, is a judging before examining. It is an acceptance or rejection of what suits or contradicts our nature. It is a joyful urge of our living being to pursue what we feel to be in harmony with us, be it true or false". This is a pretty sweeping rejection of the validity of any absolute truth, an admission that truth is relative and determined for each of us by our individual needs. As in so many of Goethe's thoughts we hear in this passage an undertone of cynicism and amoralism

which has grown to a roar in the mouths of German thinkers since Goethe, until in our time it has swamped the voice of truth and humanity in Germany and has brought the German people to destruction. But Goethe, though he recognizes our innate tendency to believe only what suits us, still assumes the existence of truth and falsehood, and in that "We know only too well" he indicates his regret, as a moralist, at a state of things which, as a realist, he has to admit and record.

If belief is the result of subconscious urges and needs of our spiritual nature, the whole philosophical paraphernalia of logical proof is a waste of time (except in so far as it satisfies a subconscious need of the philosopher). What is important is not to "prove" your point but to present it effectively—and this is done through art. For this reason Goethe regretted that Schiller had wasted so much time philosophizing.

Goethe's own thought was intuitive; he spoke of his *gute Einfälle*, "good ideas, which present themselves to us like free children of God and shout to us: 'Here we are!' "; and he made no pretence of being able to avoid contradictions in his beliefs. So he said of himself that he was "as a scientist a pantheist, as a poet a polytheist", by which he meant that in his scientific work he started from the assumption that all Nature is divine, that God dwells as an all-pervading spirit in all things; but when he came to express this belief in poetry, it was far too abstract, it provided no clear forms, no pictures, and so as a poet he individualized the different aspects of God in Nature and made gods of them, as the Greeks had done. He needed pictures even for his thinking. Faust, in describing his communings with Nature during which he has come to see into her breast "as into the bosom of a friend", speaks of the "silver forms" which appear to him and "moderate the austere joy of contemplation"; by which Goethe meant that he could not think for long about the ideal nature of man without calling to his aid the marble statues of Greek gods and heroes, which express in form far more than could ever be put into words.

What Goethe sought when he was rapt in "the austere joy of contemplation" was an *Anschauung*, not an idea or a concept, but a vision, a picture for his mind's eye, such a picture as would reveal

the whole truth about the problem he was contemplating. So when, in Italy, he was trying to find out how Nature produces all the multiplicity of plant-forms, the outcome of all his contemplation was the vision of the *Urpflanze*, the basic plant-form common to all plants, which are only variants of it. You may say, as Schiller did, that this *Urpflanze* is merely a Platonic "Idea", and you will be right; but it is more as well. Goethe insisted almost angrily to Schiller that the *Urpflanze* was not an *Idee* but an *Erfahrung*, that is, something which could be experienced by the senses as a phenomenon, and when he first saw his *Urpflanze* in his mind's eye the vision was so clear and so intense that he actually hoped to find it growing in the public gardens at Palermo. He called his *Urpflanze* and also the parallel *Urtier* (basic animal) *Urbilder* or even *Urphänomene*—that is, basic phenomena, and thus clearly indicated that they were to him not abstract ideas but things which could—potentially at least—appear in this phenomenal world. But it is very difficult to see how a thing which is the "model" for all existing plants and could even be used to create new species, which is in fact an idea in the Platonic sense, could at the same time exist in the world of phenomena and individuation. The illogicality is typical for Goethe's thought; he did not care if the reasoning faculty could not conceive of a thing being both a phenomenon and an idea. That only showed the limitations of the reasoning faculty as a means to knowledge.

The *Urpflanze* and the *Urtier* are static types, the unchanging mould in which individuals are formed. What interested Goethe above all, what filled him with awe and wonder, was the process of creating the individuals from the type. And here in his efforts to fathom Nature's processes his thought shows at its most typical. It is as dynamic as Nature herself, insistent always to get behind the thing as it is, to the forces by which it becomes what it is. He was clear that the manifestations of the archetype are in constant flux; there is no such thing as the "form" of an individual living thing; what was its form one minute is no longer so the next. In the phenomenal world πάντα ῥεῖ. And this is so not only of individuals but also of species. So Goethe extended the Heraclitan wisdom in such a way as to destroy the world of both theology and

science which at that time regarded the forms of life as static, created "in the beginning" and continuing unchanged for all time. This redisposition of emphasis from "being" on to "becoming" was the creative act which made possible the later achievements of biology and zoology. It is true to say that Goethe introduced to science the idea of evolution. He explicitly stated that variations from the archetype are daily arising by the process of heredity and that these variations are brought about by environment. The species were not created ready-made by God "in the beginning". But having broken the old cramping mould of thought, he did not go on to establish by minute observation of living and extinct animals the exact path which evolution had taken. The material, which palaeontology has since provided, was not available to him. Instead he sought, and thought he found, great general principles or tendencies which mould the material forms of animals and plants throughout the generations. The result is something very different from Darwin's origin of species. Goethe knows nothing of the survival of the fittest. He even seems to reject the idea that animals develop organs because they are useful to them in their special environment. So he regards the large ears of the deer and the monkey's tail as unfortunate excrescences which only serve to indicate how far these animals are from "perfection". These general tendencies, that mould material forms, are more *a priori*, not based on the creature's purpose in life, but on an all-pervading congruence throughout Nature. So, because water is (as he shows in the *Metamorphose der Pflanzen* and the *Farbenlehre*) the most material, unspiritual element, it tends as an environment to "bloat" the creatures which live in it, so that their bodies grow in proportion to their limbs—for example: fish, seals and ducks. Air on the other hand makes its denizens light, dry, slender and swift, so that they have energy and material left over to provide themselves with feathers. For there is another general principle at work in evolution, that of compensation: if a species is extravagant in one direction it must retrench in another. Thus no animals have both sharp, tearing teeth and horns. The frog has long legs and therefore a small body. *Per contra* the duck has, in comparison with other birds, a heavy, swollen body

because it lives on the water, and so the legs must be short. Goethe does not explain how the swan, with the same "swollen" body as the duck, manages to afford itself a long neck; nor why a frog, though as liable as other water-animals to bloating, has a small body and long legs.

It is at such a moment that a scientist reading Goethe's *Morphologie* or *Farbenlehre* lays the book aside with a polite but unsympathetic smile. The thought, if it can be called thought, is too illogical, too arbitrary, almost one would say too primitive. Goethe picks out the example which seems to prove his point and ignores innumerable other examples which disprove it. His scientific works are full of such illogicality and deliberate selection of evidence. His approach to scientific problems was, by our standards, completely unscientific. By his fortieth year he had acquired for himself by intuition, by observation and from the teachings of traditional wisdom, a pretty clear idea of the great general principles which create and maintain the world. When he turned his attention to any specific field of scientific research, whether it was plant-growth and structure, the weather or the nature and origin of colour, his purpose was to show these great general principles at work in the specific field. And in his literary works—in *Die Wahlverwandtschaften* or in *Faust*—he showed the same principles operating in human affairs. Apparent exceptions to his basic principles did not worry him. The fact that the swan has a swollen body as well as a long neck seems to disprove the law of compensation; but Goethe, if confronted with this exception, would merely have replied that some other premise must here be at work, whose nature was still hidden from him, and that the apparent exception did nothing to invalidate the examples in which the law of compensation is clearly manifested. He was all for the vital *aperçu*, the creative half-truth, which suggests ever new and wider combinations. The negative way of seeking truth which sets out to test and, if possible, disprove every assertion had no attractions for him. Here too he forebodes the development of German thought. In the hundred years between 1780 and 1880 German philosophy moved from Kant's close-reasoned, largely destructive system to Nietzsche's poetical or aphoristic

assertion of pregnant truths or even of "creative falsehoods"; and in our own day the Nazi philosophers and propagandists carried this tendency to its logical conclusion.

In Lebensfluten, im Tatensturm
Wall' ich auf und ab,
Webe hin und her!
Geburt und Grab,
Ein ewiges Meer,
Ein wechselnd Weben,
Ein glühend Leben,
So schaff' ich am sausenden Webstuhl der Zeit,
Und wirke der Gottheit lebendiges Kleid.

This was Goethe's inspired vision of the world when he was young—the restless surge and sweep of vast forces, the rise and fall of species and individuals, birth and death, bloom and decay; and the result of it all: the living cloak of God which we know as the phenomenal world. And in the *Fragment über die Natur* there is the same picture of incessant restless motion in Nature, the pulse and surge of a mighty being which has its origin and its purpose within itself. "Es ist ein ewiges Leben, Werden und Bewegen in ihr, und doch rückt sie nicht weiter." Small wonder that the reasoning faculty is incapable of grasping such a being. Goethe's later scientific works, his *Metamorphose* and *Farbenlehre*, are attempts to describe certain aspects of this "eternal life, growth and movement" in detail, and especially to get a glimpse into Nature's workshop; to see not merely the cloak which she weaves, but her herself at the roaring loom of time. Goethe was insistent that no living thing has a fixed, unchanging form—"Sie schafft ewig neue Gestalten; was da ist war noch nie; was war kommt nicht wieder—alles ist neu und doch immer das alte"; and the object of his research was the forces which bring about the constant flux, the emergence of one form from another, the gradual development of higher forms from lower. These forces, he

thought, were few and simple, but by combination and recombination they could produce all the manifold forms of the world—"Sie hat wenige Triebfedern, aber nie abgenutzte, immer wirksam, immer mannigfaltig"; and they habitually appear throughout Nature as pairs of opposites. All forms of life are produced by the interplay, the tension between polar opposites which, by their nature, pulling against each other, produce the visible form at the point of equilibrium. So, to take examples from many aspects of life, the spheroidal form of our planet is the result of a conflict between centrifugal and centripetal forces; the form of a plant results from a tendency to expand, to shoot upwards and outwards, and from a tendency to contract, to arrange its parts around a central axis, to be solid and tough, to be an individual; on the spiritual plane, our conduct is the result of a polar conflict between what we desire and what is possible, between will and fate, or between emotion and reason, between our subconscious urges and the consciousness of duty or morality. This is the basic pattern of life; all forms of life are based on conflict and division. In a philosophical sense: "Das Leben ist Kampf".

It is the ancient tragic wisdom of the early Greek sages, of Anaximander and Heraclitus and Empedocles. Christianity, in insisting on the benevolence of God and in identifying God with human loving-kindness, had made conflict into a mere blemish on an otherwise perfect creation, the work of evil powers existing in sinful opposition to the Deity. The Christian ideal of a world without conflict had overlaid the earlier view that conflict is of the essence of the world, and that human affairs can be no exception to this basic law of the universe. Now Goethe revived this dynamic, and on the human plane tragic, view of the world, not because of any literary influence from the pre-Socratics (he probably became aware of Heraclitus' teaching only late in life), but because such a dynamic and realistic *Weltanschauung* was natural and inevitable to him.

But the nature of life is not merely a senseless, nihilistic struggle between opposing forces. There is a purpose in conflict. For life itself has the tendency to reconcile the conflict, to recreate the lost unity or totality out of the conflict of opposites. "Sie macht

Klüfte zwischen allen Wesen, und alles will sich verschlingen." And so out of the conflict of A and B arises a third form C which partakes of both and is higher than both. This is Nature's great secret for the creation of new forms. Goethe called the process *Polarität und Steigerung*—a phrase of typically dynamic connotation. For *Steigerung* means a screwing up, an increase of tension and a rising on to a higher level. To take a homely example: you are trying to get an outer cover back on to a car's wheel; the tension between the tyre-lever and the tyre steadily increases, the conflict becomes more and more bitter, the tyre seems to assert its individuality more and more the more you try to unite it with the wheel. And then suddenly the tyre slips into place, the tension relaxes, the struggle is over and you have, in place of the conflicting parties, each useless by itself, the united symmetry of the tyred wheel.

Hegel took this profound intuition, which Goethe never tried to define too carefully, and popularized it, making it the basis of his logic, his philosophy of Nature and above all of his interpretation of history; Marx used this dialectical interpretation of history to justify the class-struggle and the hope of a better world. Since then the idea of *Polarität und Steigerung* has become a commonplace in German thought.

It is always hard to say at what point Goethe's intuitions, his *Einfälle*, cease to be *Ahnungen*, vague awareness, and become conscious thought. In his poetry the conception of *Polarität* and *Steigerung* appears usually as a subconscious background rather than as a consciously expressed concept. We must therefore turn again to Goethe's science to see how he thought out his principle and applied it in detail to a specific case. His account of the growth of the annual plant, *die Metamorphose der Pflanze*, gives us the best example of this. The plant grows and develops by conflict between expansion and contraction, in which first one then the other gets the upper hand. It expands, shoots up into the light and spreads its leaves on every side; then it contracts, draws its parts together at one point about the axis and forms the calyx. And when expansion begins again, it is in a higher form; *Steigerung* has taken place; in contracting to form the calyx the plant has purified and

spiritualized its existence. Instead of more green leaves on an upward-shooting stem, we have the glory of the brightly-coloured corolla. And in the next stage the contracting force is so powerful that growth cannot take place by the normal vegetable process of "anastomosis"—the growing towards each other and meeting of the tiny vessels between the veins of the leaf; all that the growth process can now form are the thread-like stamens and pistil. But instead of the physical anastomosis of the early stages, the refined and spiritualized plant achieves the culmination of its existence in the mating of its male and female organs—a " spiritual anastomosis", as Goethe calls it. So by the basic tension or conflict of systole and diastole the plant raises itself stage by stage from the primitive act of expansion in the two crude cotyledons to the mysterious spiritual-physical act of mating.

Typical for Goethe's thought in all this is, firstly, the intense awareness of the forces at work, almost one might say, of the inner dynamic life of the plant; secondly, the ascription of spiritual values to a purely physical natural process. We feel, indeed, as we read the tersely worded paragraphs, that Goethe is describing not only the physical development of a plant but also symbolically the spiritual development of a human being. Or at least he attributes to the plant a spiritual purpose in its life analogous to that of human life.

The same attribution of spiritual values to natural phenomena comes out still more strikingly—to our way of thinking even more strangely—in Goethe's feeling about the colour red. To Goethe red was the highest, the most perfect colour. He often called it *purple*, "because of its high dignity" which, as it were, entitled it to be addressed royally. Red was to Goethe the most perfect colour for just the same reason that, for him, the flower was more perfect than the leaf, or the "spiritual anastomosis" of mating was a higher process than that of vegetable growth. For red too, according to Goethe, is the final product, the culmination, of a process of *Polarität* and *Steigerung*. Yellow and blue, the basic colours in polar opposition (the one representing Light, the other Darkness) when intensified (*gesteigert*) pass through orange and violet respectively until they meet in red. It is the opposite process

from that by which green is formed, which is a mere mixing of yellow and blue particles. Red is the product, as it were, of a striving and a straining on the part of yellow and blue to achieve something higher than themselves, which is yet the quintessence of themselves. And the miracle is that each polar opposite, in striving away from its opposite to be quintessentially itself, arrives at the same point as its opposite and unites with it, as red, in a sort of mating or "spiritual anastomosis". Goethe calls red the "highest" colour not on vulgarly teleological grounds, because it is beneficial or useful to man, but because it is a clear symbol of the basic creative process, by which *Gott-Natur* creates and maintains the world. It is the culmination of a successful process of *Steigerung*.

Goethe's thought shows at its most questionable in his science. In a field in which we are accustomed to demand that every assertion be critically tested and strictly related to facts, there is far too much illogicality and preconception; Goethe is much too prone to select his evidence and to apply moral or aesthetic standards to natural processes. Yet in spite of these faults there is a greatness of conception about his approach to scientific problems which commands our admiration. He was determined to penetrate below the surface appearances and to know "was die Welt im Innersten zusammenhält", to find the order that underlies the apparent chaos of warring forces, to point out the ever-recurring patterns in Nature's creative processes and so to make clear the unity that binds together the infinite variety of phenomena. Moreover he had the self-confidence to believe that he had won enough insight into the nature of things to justify his reversing the usual scientific process. Instead of collecting and collating phenomena until a pattern begins to appear, he used his intuition of the patterns to explain the nature of the phenomenon and the process by which it comes to exist.

This unity, this recurrence of patterns, was not confined—how could it be?—to the realm of " natural phenomena". Man is himself a "natural phenomenon", not only his body but his mind, his heart, his soul as well; so his thoughts, emotions and actions are

moulded by the same conflicts that produce the flower or the splendour of carmine. Goethe saw the basic pattern of *Polarität* and *Steigerung* repeated again and again in the human heart. Iphigenie, torn by two irreconcilable loyalties, on the one hand to her brother, on the other to her own sense of what is right, is raised by the fearful tension to perform a deed of heroic greatness which reconciles the irreconcilable and raises all around her on to a higher moral level. In *Die Wahlverwandtschaften* Goethe made his most moving use of the *Polarität* and *Steigerung* formula, for he employed all his art to emphasize the price which must be paid in human happiness in order to achieve the culmination, to rise by conflict to a higher plane.

Die Wahlverwandtschaften, for all its *longueurs*, its creaking machinery and lack of life and colour, is one of Goethe's greatest books, for it was here that he expressed most powerfully his ideas on the problem of morality. And the answer which he gives to the old, old question: What is right? What is wrong? is profound and disturbing. He shows us human beings on the one hand as much subject to elemental, natural laws as the component substances of chemical compounds. Just as in some cases the compounds AB and CD, when brought together, split up and form new compounds AC, BD, so the combination Eduard–Charlotte is broken up by the advent of Ottilie and the Captain and tends to re-form as Eduard–Ottilie and Charlotte–Captain. In human beings the elemental power of attraction appears as what we call love. In the case of Ottilie and Eduard it is so irresistible that for a long time considerations of human morality—the marriage tie between Eduard and Charlotte—are powerless to keep them apart. But at last Ottilie's innate moral sense asserts itself, prevents the divorce and the realignment of the couples on the basis of elemental attraction, and insists on renunciation. The conflict is joined between the elemental, natural law and the human, moral law. And then, just as Iphigenie by her greatness evolved out of her conflict a solution on a higher plane, so Ottilie succeeds in reconciling the demands both of the elemental attraction and of human morality. But the effort is too much for the frail human being. Crushed thus between ruthless opposites the beautiful girl must die. But she has

GOETHE in 1779

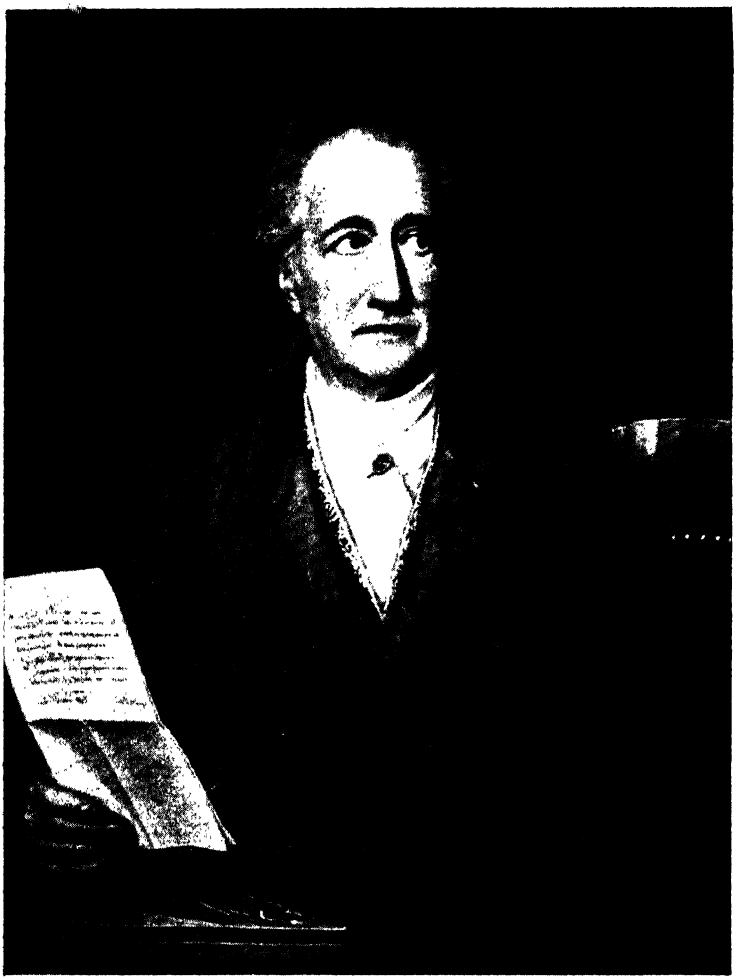
from the pastel drawing by G. O. May

GOETHE in Italy, 1786-88

from the painting by J. H. W. Tischbein

GOETHE in 1800

from the crayon drawing by Friederich Bury



GOETHE in 1828

from the oil painting by J. K. Stieler

achieved, by tension and *Steigerung*, a higher form of life, which Goethe symbolizes in her sainthood and her miraculous powers after death.

What then is right? what wrong? Was Ottilie wrong to let Eduard, a married man, love her and to love him in return? Human morality says that she was wrong, and indeed in time her own heart told her so. But if she had merely suppressed her love at the start as Charlotte did her love for the Captain, there would have been no *Steigerung*, no culmination on a higher plane, none of the unearthly beauty of her death, none of the miraculous beneficent influence which streamed from her after death. Human morality is too cautious; it would nip all conflict in the bud. Without conflict, conflict even unto death, there can be no new forms of life, no greatness, no *höchste Augenblicke*, or supreme moments:

> Und solang du das nicht hast,
> Dieses: Stirb' und Werde,
> Bist du nur ein trüber Gast
> Auf der dunklen Erde.

We must be prepared to die that we may live. By plunging recklessly, deaf to the reproving cries of morality, into the river of passion, Ottilie had made certain the death of her old self and her rebirth as a new self on a higher plane. So with infinite tenderness Goethe puts human morality in its place in the whole scheme of things. He does not cast it off as a set of worthless shackles on the free personality. Far from it. His sympathies as a human being are all with those who are struggling to resist the elemental power. But he is bound to show, not merely that there are forces in the world which conflict irreconcilably with the moral law, but that these forces, when seen *sub specie aeternitatis* and not merely with the eye of the human moralist, terrible and ruthless as they are in their utter disregard for human happiness, are yet not Satanic, not evil, but are of God, are part of *Gott-Natur* and so have as much claim to our respect as have the moral laws. We belong with half our nature, with the basic part of our nature, to the elements, and so it cannot be right, Goethe felt, to suppress our elemental nature utterly, as Kant and the Christian ascetics taught. But it is the tragic

nature of life, which Goethe was concerned to show in *Die Walverwandtschaften* (as he had shown it earlier in *Werther*), that sometimes the elements and the moral laws clash with such fury in a frail human being that death can be the only outcome.

That moral laws were not of absolute value for Goethe is shown by his admiration for Napoleon. For Goethe Napoleon was above judgment by moral standards; he was an elemental force, like a storm or an earthquake which destroys or renews with equal indifference to man's happiness, and which can be tamed only by a more powerful elemental force—as Napoleon was by the Russian winter. From admiration of Napoleon on these grounds it is not such a long step to admiration of Hitler.

Ottilie, in the last stages of her struggle, felt herself in the power of a *Dämon*. Goethe himself knew all too well the experience of being swept along, by a will seemingly quite outside himself, to think and do things which by himself he could not have thought and done. He called this force *das Dämonische*, as the Greeks had done. What is *das Dämonische*? It is indefinable, unknowable; its nature can only be hinted at by examples and similes. It is irrational in its working, neither good nor bad, but unconcerned with human morals and happiness. It is a monstrous driving force which imposes its will on men; and to the individual on whom it seizes it is terrible, yet intoxicating in its ruthless power. It can raise him to heights of glory, to an intensity of experience beyond what is allowed to men, and then it can dash him to utter destruction, of soul as well as of body. Goethe was afraid of the *Dämon*; in middle and later life he did all he could to keep himself out of its grip; yet he knew in his heart that the greatest things would not be granted him without it. Napoleon he saw as a man constantly driven along by a *Dämon*. Byron was another, though the *Dämon* did not always choose to dwell in men of high talent or noble mind. It could choose a base instrument, a man who then was endowed with fatal power over his fellow men, to sway and bend and drive them to his wanton will. Goethe, when he spoke thus, was probably thinking of Cagliostro; we think of Hitler. Goethe never attributed his own poetical gift to the daemonic, but he did regard poetic inspiration as akin to *das Dämonische*, because

both enter the human being through the unconscious and make him act in a way which amazes him when he returns to himself.

This conception of the daemonic has proved one of Goethe's most fruitful thoughts; but the fruit is poisoned. Clearly the idea of a power—which must be of God, since everything in Nature is God—which seizes on a man and forces him to do what it wishes, even though in so doing he transgresses all the moral laws, opens the way to the most dangerous consequences. Goethe himself was insistent that, even when in the grip of the *Dämon*, one must struggle to keep control and to direct the course of one's headlong rush as far as possible by human standards. But to less powerful characters *das Dämonische* seems a good excuse, on the individual plane, for an easy acquiescence in the raging of every passion, on the political plane, for a fatalistic acceptance of every powerful man or movement that seems to be sweeping on to success. Bismarck's creation of the German Empire was certainly daemonic, but does this justify the German Liberals' acquiescence in the means he employed? Hitler's rise to power was even more clearly daemonic and more clearly supported by a daemonic possession of the German people. And now the exhilaration and the madness are over; the *Dämon* has gone and the victim awakes.

Another profound intuition of Goethe's, another truth deeply fraught with danger, has helped the idea of the daemonic to lure the Germon people down the path to destruction. In *Selige Sehnsucht*, the most perfect poem of the *Divan*, Goethe sings in inextricably interwoven images the longing of the moth for death in the candle-flame, the longing of lovers for reckless consummation and the longing of the unborn soul (like Thel) for death into what we call life:

> Das Lebend'ge will ich preisen,
> Das nach Flammentod sich sehnet.

And the moral is:

> . . . solang du das nicht hast,
> Dieses :Stirb' und Werde,
> Bist du nur ein trüber Gast
> Auf der dunklen Erde.

We must be ready to let our old way of life die so that we may live on in new forms; we must risk the blind plunge into certain destruction in faith that we shall live again on the other side; or even without that faith

(Und wär es mit Gefahr, ins Nichts dahinzufliessen)

we must plunge into the flame, flare up and vanish in one supreme moment, one *höchster Augenblick*. Faust is Goethe's greatest symbol of this reckless longing for new experience, new life at all costs. It is not pleasure or a life of ease that Faust asks of Mephistopheles:

Du hörest ja, von Freud' ist nicht die Rede.

It is experience, sensation, life at its most intense, all joys, all sorrows of mankind, the heights and the depths, even the experience of shipwreck and utter destruction. He reels from one reckless adventure to another, always seeking his supreme moment, the moment of perfect living, even though he knows that when he achieves it the Devil will have his soul for ever. When Chiron begs Faust to be healed of his mad desire for Helen, Faust rejects the proposal. He is so sure of the essential strength of his mind, he feels he can afford to be what mediocre souls call "mad":

Geheilt will ich nicht sein. Mein Sinn ist mächtig.
Da wär' ich ja wie andere niederträchtig.

It is the contempt of the great soul for the cautious bourgeois virtues, the joyful acceptance even of madness because madness is akin to greatness. Three generations before Nietzsche it throws on to German thought the shadow of the superman, with his "Jasagen trotzdem", his affirmation of a life which he knows can bring nothing but conflict and suffering.

In Goethe's teaching about the nature of the world this praise of *Stirb' und Werde*, of the reckless pursuit of life at its most intense is by no means his main theme. *Iphigenie*, *Tasso*, *Hermann und Dorothea*, and both parts of *Wilhelm Meister* teach a moderate humanism, based on the assumption that man is in the world to live an actively productive and useful life according to his gifts, respecting the lives of others and especially respecting the *Grenzen*

der Menschheit, the natural limitations of human life as established by the divine power. This moderate humanism is Goethe's message to men. But he was granted intuitions and experiences which showed him clearly enough the inadequacy of his own humanism as an explanation of the nature of life. There was *das Dämonische* and there was the longing for the candle-flame. And with typical perversity it is these perceptions of a seductive and dangerous truth above morality, these hints of a set of absolute values unconcerned with human happiness, which life has seized on and has made fertile in the thought of Goethe's countrymen. Not

Edel sei der Mensch, hilfreich und gut

but

Das Lebend'ge will ich preisen,
Das nach Flammentod sich sehnet

has survived through Wagner and Nietzsche to the Nazis. How profoundly Goethe thus disturbed the moral values of the Germans is shown by the case of Thomas Mann. Throughout his life Mann has been wrestling with the problem of the conflict between bourgeois humanism and the fascination of the dark. In *The Magic Mountain* Hans Castorp says to Claudia: "There are two paths to life, one is the regular one, direct and honest. The other is bad, it leads through death—that is the spiritual way"; and in his latest novel, *Dr. Faustus*, Mann applies the insight he has so painfully won to the German problem. With infinite love and understanding, yet with unflinching severity, he traces the fatal effects on the German people of just this fascination for the daemonic and for the supreme moment, the candle-flame and the reckless *Jasagen*.

To blame Goethe for having sown the dragon's teeth would seem unjust; he saw the truth and had to utter it. If men do not know how to use the truth, it remains no less the truth. Or should he have buried the fearful word in his breast? Tantalus, who sat at golden tables with the gods, was cast down into Tartarus for telling their secrets to men and alone of all his bloodstained race is still unforgiven. This intuition of the poet's tragic dilemma,

which Goethe wove into *Iphigenie*, seems to be awfully confirmed by the use which men have made of the truth he showed them. That Goethe himself in his life showed how to balance the warring poles, how to check the daemonic with caution and reason and the longing for the candle-flame by the desire for permanence, and to build out of those formidable tensions a human life as great as any that has been lived—all this was unavailing. The winged truths were out and could be neither recalled nor controlled.

GOETHE'S REPUTATION IN ENGLAND DURING HIS LIFETIME

by William Rose

THE subject of Goethe's influence in England, generally and in relation to individual authors, has been studied by scholars in England, France, Germany and America and the results of their researches recorded in numerous books and articles. Vast as has been the amount of spadework, however, it cannot be said that the discoveries have been anything but meagre. In spite of the powerful advocacy of Carlyle and the voices that were raised in later years, Goethe has had an insignificant part in the shaping of English culture. Little would be gained by an attempt to present a picture of the gradual penetration of a knowledge of his life and works in this country, for even to-day he is known and appreciated by comparatively few. There can be no question of a satisfying story, full and well-rounded, revealing an influence growing wider and deeper as the nineteenth century progressed. There was never a full stream of Goethe-knowledge, and the occasional outbursts of interest degenerated to mere trickles, rarely attempting to widen out but in general tending to be sucked into the sands of indifference.

It is not the purpose of this article to itemize the successive translations into English of Goethe's works or to trace every individual

case of influence on an English writer. The enthusiasm of over-zealous researchers has sometimes led them to impute to Goethe an inspiration which was properly due to the *Zeitgeist*. Where immediate influence was possible, it was too readily assumed that it was probable, and this developed before long into the conviction that it was actual. By adhering to the bare facts, taking into consideration the background of the age, and providing the essential materials for the necessary synthesis, this article will attempt to offer a coherent account of the ways in which Goethe became known in England, the aspects of his work which were seized on by his interpreters and the reading public, the extent to which they were attracted or repelled, and the attitude towards him of such outstanding English writers as were sufficiently interested to borrow or learn from him.

The quality of the impact of Goethe's writings on English literature and the English public was conditioned by a number of factors of the greatest significance. On the one hand his fame was propagated, both orally and in print, by enthusiastic interpreters who had come into personal contact with him and had read his works in the original. On the other hand his works became known only in a few cases as they appeared. The English public did not receive an almost constant stream of poems, novels or dramas on which to base their opinion of Goethe, as did his countrymen. They were confronted at intervals with single works, not necessarily in the chronological order of their composition, and were impressed, favourably or unfavourably, to an undue degree owing to their ignorance of the background and circumstances. They could follow the reviews and essays, frequently misinformed or biased, which appeared in the English periodicals, but for more direct knowledge they had to rely largely upon translations. These were generally of mediocre quality, even when they were not actually misleading, and did not give the same impression as would have been derived from a reading of the originals. Much of Goethe's work was even translated from French versions by people who were ignorant of German. As this was a by no means uncommon practice, English knowledge of German literature was inevitably inadequate and distorted. *Werther*, the first of Goethe's

works to be translated, appeared in English garb five years after its publication in Germany, but long after he had passed the mood in which it was written his other writings were practically unknown and the sedate minister of Weimar was still thought of as the impetuous young hothead of Wetzlar. Until Carlyle began to read German we cannot speak of the influence of Goethe's thought, but before his death the general attitude was that of respect, tinged with hostile criticism on moral grounds, for a poet who was somewhat vaguely recognized as a genius. If, during his lifetime, any influence other than that of his thought became manifest, it consisted of little more than the borrowing by English writers of certain *motifs* from his works. The admiration he aroused was somewhat indeterminate in quality, and was balanced, or more than balanced, by an antipathy for which the reasons were more solid.

When, after his death, Goethe's writings were first studied with some degree of intensity, they were detached from the background of the social life of his country and the links which bound them to the author's personal experience were broken. His literary activity covered more than one literary generation, from some twenty years before the outbreak of the French Revolution to the passing of the English Reform Act, and he lived on into an age whose progressive views on democracy and nationality he did not share. For the general state of knowledge about Goethe in the third decade of the nineteenth century we may call Carlyle to witness, who said in 1828 that, though his countrymen had heard much concerning the German author, what they had heard for the most part excited and perplexed rather than instructed them. "Vague rumours of the man have, for more than half a century, been humming through our ears: from time to time, we have even seen some distorted, mutilated transcript of his own thoughts, which, all obscure and hieroglyphical as it might often seem, failed not to emit here and there a ray of keenest and purest sense; travellers also are still running to and fro, importing the opinions or, at worst, the gossip of foreign countries: so that, by one means or another, many of us have come to understand, that considerably the most distinguished poet and thinker of his age is called Goethe,

and lives at Weimar, and must, to all appearance, be an extremely surprising character: but here, unhappily, our knowledge almost terminates." Carlyle then goes on to assert that authoritative replies are lacking to the essential queries: "What manner of man *is* this? How shall we interpret, how shall we even see him? What is his spiritual structure, what at least are the outward form and features of his mind? Has he any real poetic worth; how much to his own people, how much to us?" If the English had no answers to these questions, it is hardly possible to speak of his influence before this date except on Carlyle himself. Carlyle admits that the reviewers had been endeavouring to satisfy public curiosity on these points, but states roundly that their reports were untrustworthy; that the Goethe they portrayed was not the real man; that their portraits of him were only "copies, with some retouchings and ornamental appendages, of our grand English original Picture of the German generally . . . and resembling Goethe, as some unusually expressive Sign of the Saracen's Head may resemble the present Sultan of Constantinople!"[1]

Carlyle was here not altogether just to those who preceded him in the work of spreading the fame of his hero. A number of Englishmen had already visited Weimar, had come into personal contact with Goethe, and were passing on their knowledge and opinions in their conversation, in letters, in reviews and in translations, in so far as they were able to understand or appreciate his work. The most important of these visitors and subsequent propagandists were William Taylor and Crabb Robinson.

William Taylor of Norwich went to Germany in 1781 at the age of sixteen and stayed for about eighteen months. It is uncertain whether he made use of a letter of introduction to Goethe with which he had been provided, but some years after his return, from the nineties onwards, he turned his knowledge of the language to good account by translating a number of German works and extracts and reviewing German publications. In 1793 he published a translation of *Iphigenie*, a copy of which he sent to Goethe, though the latter hurt his feelings by omitting to acknowledge its receipt. He contributed a large number of articles on German

[1] *Foreign Review* (1828).

literature to various periodicals over a period of many years and eventually published in 1828–30 his *Historic Survey of German Poetry*, which was based on his articles. This book was reviewed at length by Carlyle in *The Edinburgh Review* in 1831, and with much of his scathing criticism, directed at its lack of cohesion, inadequate knowledge, false judgments and obsolete point of view, we can agree, though he did not sufficiently allow for the difficulties in the way of such a task and his condemnation is at times neither just nor fair. Carlyle himself blundered, since he did not take the trouble to verify what he thought were facts, and accused Taylor, quite wrongly, of faults of detail. He was sarcastic, for example, at the latter's expense for attributing Sir Walter Scott's translation of *Götz* to a William Scott, and expressing the view that this William Scott and Walter Scott were the same person. Scott himself wrote to Taylor to protest against the same alleged mistake but, as a matter of fact, the title-page did give the Christian name of the translator as *William*, though Scott himself seems to have been unaware of this for over thirty years, until Taylor published his *Survey*. Carlyle further accused Taylor of falsely stating that *Stella* ends in bigamy. The first version, of course, does end with the prospect of a *ménage à trois*; but Carlyle was apparently unacquainted with it, and he insinuated that Taylor had only read a French translation, which was a gross insult to a man who had done so much to spread a knowledge of German literature in England. Carlyle did admit the comparative excellence of Taylor's translations, but the latter was also entitled to the considerable credit of having continuously, over a period of some forty years, brought the English public into contact with German literature, and his book was a pioneer work of its kind, the first English history of German literature. He had read the works in the original and his critical writings broke fresh ground. His services in introducing Goethe to the English public are not to be lightly estimated. It was he who first laid stress on contemporary German poetry and drama, and drew attention to the significance of Goethe's lyric production. In his *Survey* he included his own translations of a number of the poems.

It is true, however, that he did not give Goethe his due, and

devoted an inordinate amount of space in his book to Kotzebue, for whom he had an excessive admiration. "In comparing Göthe with his dramatic rivals Kotzebue and Schiller," he says, "it must be allowed that he had the merit of showing them the way: . . . and if he has left no gothic tragedy equal to the *Gustavus Wasa* of the one, or to the *Wilhelm Tell* of the other, yet they have neither of them left a classical tragedy equal to his *Iphigeneia in Tauris*." He then compares these three contemporaries: "To Kotzebue must be conceded the praise of superior invention: his facility, fertility, mutability astonish: his comic approaches his tragic force: he has the variety of English weather. . . . To Schiller belongs the merit of deeper pathos and of higher majesty; but his resources are less various, and he has no comic powers. . . . To Göthe must be awarded greater truth of nature than to either of his competitors: but for that very reason he produces less immediate effect. Kotzebue appeals to the sympathy, Schiller to the admiration, but Göthe to the experience . . . he does not pourtray man as he should be, or could be, but as he is. . . . He has no lesson to teach, but that such things are, and that the proper study of mankind is man. . . . Not always are his heroes, or his fables, sufficiently attaching, or interesting: yet every sentiment, and every incident is probable."

Taylor's biographer Robberds offers an explanation of the inadequacy of the space allotted to Goethe in the *Survey* and of the nature of Taylor's criticism. He says, "Goethe . . . and his writings . . . are dismissed with remarkable brevity. This neglect of so voluminous and celebrated an author displeased his friends, and dissatisfied many who expected and wished for a more detailed recital." He then gives the reasons for what he calls "a grave defect." "In the amassed materials for the work, Goethe had been much overlooked. The translation of the *Iphigenia* was one of William Taylor's earliest productions, and he eagerly presented a copy of it to the author, . . . the receipt of which was not even acknowledged. This want of common courtesy was resented as a rudeness by a young man, who was himself punctilious in such matters, and who felt that the manner in which he had executed his task merited, if not a testimony of approbation, at least a letter

of thanks from him whose reputation he had thus attempted to extend. . . . In addition to this cause of alienation, there is also in most of Goethe's writings a tone which did not harmonize with William Taylor's mind. His characters are indeed naturally and forcibly drawn, but he invents for them situations so extravagant as to be repugnant to our habits, nature and reason. The Epicureanism of the disciple of Wieland turned with distaste from such exhibitions. Slightly noticed, for these reasons, in William Taylor's early reviews of German literature, Goethe occupies in this collective assemblage of them a less prominent station than many think him entitled to hold; and they will also probably find indications of the 'alte Groll' still lingering in the few short comments on his more recent works."[1]

When Taylor was visited by Crabb Robinson at Norwich in 1813, the latter noted in his diary: "We talked on German literature in which Taylor is a heretic, for he does not acknowledge the supremacy of Goethe", and *à propos* of the *Survey* he said in 1828 that though it was a very sensible book, it would not recommend German poetry to English readers, that Taylor knew little of the really great men. In a letter to Goethe, however, in the following year Robinson praised the translation of *Iphigenie*, which "as it was the first, so it remains the best, version of any of your larger poems." He also, in an article in *The Monthly Repository* in 1832, defended Taylor against Carlyle's attack, but the misleading effect of the *Survey* on the general public may be gauged from a letter written to Taylor by a gentleman in 1829 after he had read the first two volumes and before the third volume dealing with Herder, Goethe and Schiller had appeared. He said that he owed to them all the information he possessed of German poetry. "I long," he wrote, "to see the third volume; but I suspect that the golden age of German poetry expired with Wieland."

Crabb Robinson, unlike Taylor, recognized and emphasized the outstanding quality and significance of Goethe and, though he published comparatively little critical work, he exercised considerable influence as the propagator of a knowledge of German

[1] J. W. Robberds: *A Memoir of the Life and Writings of the late William Taylor of Norwich* (2 vols., London, 1843).

literature, and of Goethe in particular, through his personal contacts with distinguished English men of letters, among whom were Coleridge, Wordsworth, Lamb, Hazlitt and Carlyle. He tells us himself that William Taylor, to whom he was introduced in 1798, encouraged in him a growing taste for German literature, and in 1800, at the age of twenty-five, he went to Germany. In November of the following year he was at Weimar, where he met Goethe, and from 1802 to 1805 he lived at Jena, where he studied at the University. During these years he contributed articles on German literature to an English monthly, and he again met Goethe, even dining on at least one occasion at his house. From 1810 he was settled permanently in London and it was not until 1829 that he again came into personal contact with Goethe, though he continued meanwhile to publish articles on German literature and translations, which do not appear, however, to have attracted much notice. It is from his diaries, both published and unpublished, his reminiscences, and his correspondence that we are enabled to realize the unique position which Goethe held in his estimation. He was possibly the best German scholar of his generation, before Carlyle, and his knowledge of German literature was appreciated later by Goethe, who wrote to Zelter in 1829: "Zu gleicher Zeit war ein Engländer bei uns, der zu Anfang des Jahrhunderts in Jena studiert hatte und seit der Zeit der deutschen Literatur gefolgt war, auf eine Weise von der man sich gar keinen Begriff machen konnte. Er war so recht in *merita causae* unsrer Zustände initiiert, dass ich ihm, wenn ich auch gewollt hätte, und wie man wohl gegen Fremde zu tun pflegt, keinen blauen phraseologischen Dunst vor die Augen bringen durfte." It is evident from numerous passages of not altogether favourable criticism in Robinson's diaries and elsewhere that his appreciation of Goethe's works was not blind worship. The comprehensive nature of Robinson's knowledge of German literature was exaggerated by Goethe, but he was undoubtedly well equipped to explain the importance of Goethe to his countrymen. If his activity in this respect was limited to a small circle, this was compensated by the fact that that circle contained some of the most distinguished names in English literature at the time. His influence, however,

must not be over-estimated, for he seems to have been unable to explain his admiration of Goethe in other than the most general terms, and though all his life he spoke to his friends and acquaintances of Goethe the poet, he entertained deep-rooted objections to the moral and religious aspects of some of Goethe's most important writings.

Another visitor of note to Weimar before the end of the eighteenth century was Matthew Gregory ("Monk") Lewis, who was born in the same year as Crabb Robinson but went to Germany some years before the latter, in 1792. He wrote to his mother from Weimar in that year that among other people to whom he had been introduced was "M. de Goethe, the celebrated author of *Werter*, so you must not be surprised if I should shoot myself one of these mornings." He returned to England a few months later. It was the more sensational productions of German literature which appealed to him, those which dealt with medieval knights and robbers or the supernatural, and he had a large share in the introduction into England of the tales and melodramas of horror of which he himself provided examples in, among others, his novel *The Monk*, which gave him his nickname, his *Tales of Terror* and *The Castle Spectre*. Mme. de Staël, in her book *De l'Allemagne*, referred later to "le principe de la terreur, qui est un des grands moyens de la poésie allemande", and Sir Walter Scott tells us that as Lewis completed his education abroad, "he had an opportunity of indulging his inclination for the extraordinary and supernatural, by wandering through the whole enchanted land of German faery and *diablerie*, not forgetting the paths of her enthusiastic tragedy and romantic poetry."[1] Lewis translated the ballad *Erlkönig* and in *The Monk*, which was published in 1795, we can perhaps see a certain influence of the *Faust* fragment of 1790. Scott also made a translation of *Erlkönig*, which impressed Lewis, and after the two had met they collaborated in the *Tales of Wonder*, a volume of ballads, some translated, some original, which was published in 1801. Among the translations from Goethe were *The Erl-King* and *The Fisherman* by Lewis and *Frederick and Alice* by Scott. The latter was a translation ("but with such alterations and

[1] *Essay on Imitations of the Ancient Ballad.*

additions, that it may almost be called original", as a note prefixed to the ballad states) of *Der untreue Knabe*, a parody of the *Schauerballaden*, from *Claudine von Villa Bella*. Scott says that "it owes any little merit it may possess to my friend Mr. Lewis, to whom it was sent in an extremely rude state; and who, after some material improvements, published it in his *Tales of Wonder*." We shall hear of Monk Lewis again in the summer of 1816, translating some scenes of *Faust* verbally to Byron at the Villa Diodati, near Geneva.

Even before William Taylor went to Germany, the name of Goethe had already become famous in England, for the first translation of *Werther* appeared in 1779. *The Sorrows of Werter: a German Story* was translated not from the German, but from a French version, and the translator, not content with copying his French model in the omission of such expressions as the latter considered to bear the appearance of extravagant religious sentiments, omitted a few more on his own account, "as they might possibly give offence in a work of this nature." By the year 1807 there were no less than seven different translations, one other besides the first being from the French, to say nothing of various reprints of the individual translations. The effect of the book on the minds of its readers was hardly less convulsive than in the country of its origin, in spite of the utter poverty of the English versions, of one of which Carlyle wrote that it had been "shorn of its caustic strength", "its melancholy rendered maudlin", and "its hero reduced from the stately gloom of a broken-hearted poet to the tearful wrangling of a dyspeptic tailor". The story as known in England was an insipid affair, and yet it is recorded that a copy of a translation was found beneath the pillow of a young lady who committed suicide in 1784.

In George Borrow's *Lavengro* there is a chapter devoted to a discussion between an elderly man and a youth. The older man, an admirer of the Germans, traces their philosophy to their being great smokers and, while refuting his companion's suggestion that their philosophy is itself all smoke, he asserts that smoking has a sedative effect on the nerves and enables a man to bear his sorrows

with decency and dignity. "Suicide", he says, "is not a national habit in Germany, as it is in England." "But", remarks the younger man, "that poor creature, Werther, who committed suicide, was a German." "Werther is a fictitious character," replies the older man, "and by no means a felicitous one; I am no admirer either of Werther or his author. But I should say that, if there ever was a Werther in Germany, he did not smoke. Werther, as you very justly observe, was a poor creature." The older man was intended as a portrait of William Taylor of Norwich; the younger was Borrow himself, who had received from Taylor lessons in German and was much influenced by him.

In connection with the remark that suicide was a national habit in England, it is of interest to note that Goethe, when discussing in *Dichtung und Wahrheit* the state of mind which was general when he was writing *Werther* and which contributed to the story's explosive effect, stresses the gloomy nature of English literature at the time and the influence on the young German generation of the weariness of life that they found in contemporary English poets. The English were reputed on the Continent to be prone to killing themselves, but their notoriety in this respect did not prevent an outcry at the importation into this country of a work which was regarded as a defence of suicide. *Werther* became so popular that it was sold by pedlars as a chap-book and the publishers launched a flood of imitations and other *Wertheriaden*. In the year 1785 a group depicting the death of Werther, "attended by Charlotte and her family", was on show at Mrs. Salmon's Royal Historical Wax-work in Fleet Street, and a harlequinade called *Werter* was performed at the Royal Circus in London as late as 1809. But there were also publications which evinced considerable moral indignation at the alleged unfeeling behaviour of Charlotte towards Werther, one lady even accusing her of indecent conduct in the last scene on the sofa when Werther embraced her against her will! The enthusiasm for the book lasted a long time, longer than in France, where however its literary influence was greater. England had, some years before, helped to introduce sentimentality into Germany and was being repaid with interest. Goethe, however, was nothing but a shadowy figure, and

he was confused with both Werther and Jerusalem. It was even thought in Scotland that the story had been written by the author of *Ossian*. The translator of the version which first appeared in 1801 added an appendix in which he gave an account of a conversation he had had with Werther a few days before his death, and another translator in the following year pretended to an acquaintance with Werther's family. The fact that there should have been two translations in consecutive years at so late a date, although there had been a previous one in 1799, and that yet another appeared by 1807, is sufficient evidence of the lasting popularity of the story, a popularity which is confirmed by three lines in George Crabbe's *The Parish Register*, published in 1807. They occur in the description of a room in a farmer's house:

> Fair prints along the paper'd wall are spread;
> There, Werter sees the sportive children fed,
> And Charlotte, here, bewails her lover dead.

It was some years before Goethe became known in any other capacity than as the author of *Werther*. Sir Walter Scott, writing in 1830, traces the beginnings of a more informed knowledge of German literature to the year 1788 when, he says, "a new species of literature began to be introduced into this country. Germany . . . was then, for the first time, heard of as the cradle of a style of poetry and literature, of a kind much more analogous to that of Britain than either the French, Spanish, or Italian schools, though all three had been at various times cultivated and imitated among us. . . . The names of Lessing, Klopstock, Schiller, and other German poets of eminence were only known in Britain very imperfectly. *The Sorrows of Werter* was the only composition that had attained any degree of popularity, and the success of that remarkable novel, notwithstanding the distinguished genius of the author, was retarded by the nature of its incidents. To the other compositions of Goethe whose talents were destined to illuminate the age in which he flourished, the English remained strange."[1]

The change to which this passage refers was initiated by a paper which Henry Mackenzie read to the Royal Society of Edinburgh

[1] *Essay on Imitations of the Ancient Ballad.*

in 1788, and about which it will be necessary to say something more when we come to discuss the influence of Goethe on Scott.

In the year 1790 a whole number of *The Speculator* was devoted to a discussion of Goethe's plays, before any of them had been translated. "Goëthé", it says, ". . . is a writer of high originality. . . . The fiery spirit of enthusiasm, and overflowing sensibility, which pervades the Sorrows of Werter, is already known to us, by the medium of translation. Marks of the same nervous energy, the same flow of passion, and beautiful simplicity, which distinguish that singular production are visible in his dramatic compositions. Goëthé in these manifests a softness and tenderness of the most artless and touching kind, peculiarly his own." The anonymous writer then refers to "the exquisitely feminine traits of his Stella, and the artlessness of youthful simplicity in the unfortunate heroine of Clavigo." *Götz* is "remarkable for well-supported character and manners, and abounding in strokes of pathos." In spite of a number of "improprieties", "the energy of genuine genius often blazes in Goëtz von Berlichingen, which, as it imitates the wildness of Shakspeare, is animated by a portion of his spirit." There are further references to *Egmont* and *Iphigenie*, and the last scene of *Clavigo* is printed in a free translation.

The first of Goethe's plays to appear in complete translation was *Die Geschwister* in 1792, in a volume of German dramatic pieces published at Edinburgh. The translator appears to have been a Scotsman, possibly Henry Mackenzie. In the following year appeared William Taylor's capable translation of *Iphigenie*. This was a very different kind of work from *Werther*, and it excited little interest. In 1798 appeared a translation of *Clavigo*. The same year saw a translation of the first, or bigamous, version of *Stella*, and the critics who found *Werther* immoral were not likely to consider *Stella* innocuous. It was parodied in two numbers of the Conservative and anti-revolutionary weekly *The Anti-Jacobin*, which printed in June, 1798, a comedy entitled *The Rovers; or, the Double Arrangement*, directed mainly against *Stella* but also against the dramas of Schiller and Kotzebue. The skit appears to have been a composite work by the editor William Gifford and his collaborators George Canning, John Hookham Frere, and

George Ellis. *Stella* nevertheless attracted a second translator, whose version appeared in 1806 in one of the volumes of *The German Theatre.*

Götz von Berlichingen was translated twice in 1799, by Sir Walter Scott and by Rose d'Aguilar, later known by her married name of Lawrence. She called her version *Gortz of Berlingen.* Scott's knowledge of German was very inadequate, but his translation bears marks of his genius and his interest in the play was of considerable importance for his future work. It did not attract much attention from the public and, like all the other translations of Goethe's plays during these years, it was not produced in the theatre. In replying to a letter from Goethe in 1827, Scott refers to his version of *Götz* as an example of his "good taste and consummate assurance", but says that he entirely forgot "that it is necessary not only to be delighted with a work of genius, but to be well acquainted with the language in which it is written, before we attempt to communicate its beauty to others", and confesses "the terrible blunders into which I fell".

In 1800 *The Anti-Jacobin Review* printed a letter from a contributor in Saxony on "The Literati and Literature of Germany", protesting against the corrupting influence of German literature on the public taste and national morality of Englishmen. After discussing Wieland, he proceeds to make the most libellous statements about Goethe. "The equally renowned author of Werter (Goethe) is avowedly a man of pleasure, and possesses not a single grain of morality in his composition. The only system of morality which he possesses, is private conveniency; and he rejects with disdain the well known line of Pope—'an honest man's the noblest work of God'; and all the notions which result from it. He publicly keeps a mistress, who (as a friend of mine, who has seen her often, assures me) is equally devoid of beauty, delicacy and fidelity. He has by her a charming little boy, who, as I learn from the same channel, is pitied by every person of sensibility who sees him, as, from the company of such a mother, and from the carelessness of such a father, he must be, in after life, a most unfortunate being, as the father himself, with all his fame and talents, already is at least one half of his time." A contributor to the same volume of

this journal states that the Bishop of London had recently, in a lecture at St. James's Church, warned his flock against the pernicious tendency of German literature, but we possess no record to enlighten us as to whether he included Goethe in his denunciations.

In 1801 appeared Thomas Holcroft's translation of *Hermann und Dorothea*, in blank verse, an anonymous translation in prose following it four years later. Holcroft's version is so bad that it is easy to understand Crabb Robinson's indignation, though it was based only on his reading of a review of the work containing a number of extracts. He wrote to his brother: "I felt a sort of shame for the reviewer, for Holcroft and myself. . . . I thought to myself: What must my brother think of me, if the poet I idolise could be capable of writing *such* a work? That Holcroft who has shown himself to possess so much original talent should be capable of making such verses, and giving us instead of the *living grace* of the original a *putrid carcase* is quite a riddle to me. . . . The reviewers are *almost pardonable* for not suspecting the admirable beauties of Goethe's poem." *The Monthly Review*,[1] discussing the same translation, says the poem is "a performance purely and characteristically German, and cannot possibly be admired by those who have not a true German taste." The reviewer points out that there are two characteristic qualities in Teutonic poetry, which "either astonishes by its boldness and sublimity, or engages by its familiarity and plainness. In the lofty way, it deals largely in suicides, adulteries, castles, and enchantments; in the other, it accomplishes its purposes by the assistance of hair dressing, post waggons, boiled mutton, and tobacco. Most of their great writers have blended these two modes together in their composition, and produced a most captivating medley of cookery and murder, apparitions and chambermaids." After assuring his readers that *Hermann und Dorothea* steers clear of this error and is a specimen of the *lowly* in character, action and diction, he concludes with the verdict that "the work . . . deserves to be commemorated as a very remarkable instance of perverted taste." Goethe, in acknowledging a copy that Holcroft sent him, suggested that there are two ways of

[1] December, 1802.

translating. If the translator wishes to afford his own countrymen a clear idea of the foreign author and of foreign conditions, he will adhere closely to the original; if, on the other hand, he regards the foreign work as material to be worked up, he can alter it, in accordance with his own and his countrymen's views and feelings, in such a way that it will be accepted by them practically as a new work. It was this second method which, in Goethe's view, Holcroft had adopted. "In dem letzten Falle," he wrote, "scheinen Sie sich zu befinden. Sie haben zwar im Ganzen den Gang meines Gedichtes beibehalten, aber durchaus, so viel ich beurteilen kann, die dramatisch charakteristischen, lässlichen Äusserungen meiner Personen strenger, auffallender, didaktischer überliefert, und die gemächliche epische Bewegung in einen ernsteren gemessnern Schritt verwandelt. Nach meiner wenigen Einsicht in die englische Literatur darf ich schliessen, dass Sie hierbei den Charakter Ihrer Nation vor Augen gehabt." Goethe was being much too kind to Holcroft, but he generally had a higher opinion of English translations of his works than they deserved.

The anonymous prose version also deviates considerably from the original, both in matter and spirit, and, in spite of further translations at a later date, the non-German-reading public in England has never been in a position to judge for itself the beauty and quality of the poem.

Die Wahlverwandtschaften was only known at this time from some extracts that were included in a critique in *The Monthly Review* in 1812. Byron knew something of the work, for he is reported to have mentioned in conversation that he had read a translation of it, which he thought could not have been a very good one, "for some parts seemed to border on the unintelligible." His companion remarked that he thought some parts of the original bordered on it likewise. Byron must have read it in French.[1]

Until the beginning of the nineteenth century Goethe was practically not thought of at all in England as a lyric poet. In fact, until the publication of Lewes's biography in 1855, which pointed

[1] J. G. Robertson: *Goethe and Byron* (Publications of the English Goethe Society: New Series, Vol. 2. London, 1925).

out the importance of Goethe's lyric poetry, the interest in this aspect of his genius was only spasmodic. When Crabb Robinson was studying in Germany, he tried to tell the English public something about Goethe's poetry, and in letters printed in *The Monthly Register* he included translations of some of the *Venetian Epigrams* and other rhymeless verses. Monk Lewis and Sir Walter Scott were interested in German ballads, and Scott, in addition to his version of *Erlkönig*, which he said was "to be read by a candle particularly long in the snuff", and the ballad from *Claudine von Villa Bella*, appears to have translated also the *Klaggesang von der edlen Frauen des Asan Aga*. There is no evidence, however, of this latter ever having appeared in print. Very few of Goethe's poems have become popular in translation, and these include lyrics from *Faust* and *Wilhelm Meister*. Such interest as there was in his poetry in the early part of the nineteenth century was confined mainly to some of the ballads. After the ballads a few of the early lyrics became known, and later some of the philosophical poems attracted attention in literary circles, but this did not amount to much either. An article in *The Quarterly Review* in 1814 said that "Goethe's smaller poems, numerous as the sands of the sea, we have neither time nor inclination to criticise in detail. Most of them have some sort of whimsical originality, many have considerable pathos, and all are more or less immoral."[1]

The interest in *Faust* was at first, and for long, concentrated on the romantic or fantastic elements. Lewis borrowed details from the *Fragment* for his horrific novel *The Monk*, and it was the extravagant elements which a contributor to *The Monthly Review* in 1810 chose for castigation in his discussion of the *Erster Teil* of 1808. This reviewer, who was presumably William Taylor, says that Goethe had probably in his "comic tragedy" adhered very closely to the general disposition of the scenes and incidents in the old religious mystery of Faustus, but had almost wholly rewritten the dialogue. The old religious mystery existed only in the reviewer's imagination, but he says, "At least, this would be

[1] Cf. L. Van T. Simmons: *Goethe's Lyric Poems in English Translation prior to* 1860. (University of Wisconsin Studies in Language and Literature, No. 6, Madison, 1919).

the most plausible and charitable way of accounting for the uncouth though fanciful mixture of farce and tragedy, of profaneness and morality, of vulgarity and beauty, of obscenity and feeling, which alternately chequer this wild production of the *insanity*, shall we say, or of the *genius*, of its celebrated author? Who can avoid laughter on reading this wanton competitor of Aristophanes;—who can refrain from grief on receiving such impure trash from the Goethe who, in his *Iphigenia in Tauris*, had approached nearest of all the moderns to becoming the rival of Sophocles?" He has misunderstood the end and says, "Faustus is then seized, and both the lovers are condemned to execution", the Devil hurrying off with Faust's soul. He concludes, "On the whole, the absurdities of this piece are so numerous, the obscenities are so frequent, the profaneness is so gross, and the beauties are so exclusively adapted for German relish, that we cannot conscientiously recommend its importation, and still less the translation of it, to our English students of German literature."

When Crabb Robinson came to occupy himself with *Faust* in 1811, he was in two minds about it. One day he writes, "On my walk read Goethe's new *Faust*; a most astonishing performance. . . . It is a most pregnant and equally delightful and disgusting performance. A masterpiece of genius before which I bow with humility and the beauties of which are so ravishing that I am ashamed and afraid to allow myself to feel offended by its moral and aesthetical deformities." A few days later he expresses admiration of the *Walpurgisnacht* and considers that the poetic worth of some of the scenes is "transcendent", but he is uneasy about it and about the whole poem. "However a cold thinker in the closet may tolerate a speculation concerning the Supreme Being, which even supposes the possibility of his Nonentity, yet a poem addressed to the people, which treats of the deepest subjects in a style that supposes the utmost indifference as to the result of the speculation and absolute disregard for the feelings of the people cannot well be justified. . . . A sort of Theodicy at the same time is introduced which may not be very exceptionable, but the tone of indifference as to the truth of the speculations introduced throughout is intolerable."

The English public as a whole had religious and moral objections to *Faust*, one critic referring to its "horrid blasphemies", and though Robinson tried hard to stir up enthusiasm for the poem among his friends, they had further adverse criticism to offer. In the following year he read to Coleridge a number of scenes from the *Erster Teil*. Coleridge was already acquainted with the *Fragment*, but he "now acknowledged the genius of Goethe in a manner he never did before. At the same time the want of religion and enthusiasm in Goethe is in Coleridge's mind an irreparable defect. The beginning of *Faust* does not please Coleridge nor does he think Mephistopheles a character. . . . The prologue in Heaven . . . did not offend Coleridge as I thought it would, notwithstanding it is a parody on Job." During the following week the discussion was resumed. Coleridge thought the additions to the new version the finest parts, but expressed the view that the character of Faust himself was not *motiviert*, and that it should have been explained how he was brought to the state of mind in which we find him in the opening scene and which led to the catastrophe. He even talked of writing a new *Faust*.

Charles Lamb, who only knew the work in translation, thought it "a disagreeable canting tale of seduction, which has nothing to do with the spirit of Faustus—curiosity. . . . When Marlowe gives *his* Faustus a mistress, he flies him at Helen, flower of Greece, to be sure, and not at Miss Betsy, or Miss Sally Thoughtless."[1] In 1819, *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* said that "the greatest of all Goethe's works, the Faustus, although it exhibits, in the highest degree, almost every power necessary for the construction of perfect dramatic poetry, is, after all, a mere sketch, or rather a mere fragment of a mystical romance." And it considered that "By that most untranslatable of all works . . . the great problem has been effectually solved, and for the first time—of the possibility of possessing and exercising even in immediate juxtaposition, nay, almost in perpetual interfusion with each other, the utmost powers both of clear speculative understanding and mysterious superstitious enthusiasm. If any man living can give anything like a translation of it, it must be Coleridge—but with all his majestic

[1] A. Ainger: *Letters of Charles Lamb* (London, 1904).

dreams of imagination, and all his sway of sweet and awful numbers, we fear even he would fail to do for Faustus the half of what he has done for Wallenstein."

It was the *Outlines* by the artist Retzsch, published in London in 1820, that first attracted general interest. There were twenty-six drawings, accompanied by "an Analysis of the Tragedy". The Introduction asserts that "The Faust of Goethe is perhaps the most original work of German poesy, and one for which his contemporaries are greatly indebted to him. Would you warn the young man who enters upon society, freed from the control of the school or the superintendence of the tutor—would you point out to him all the dangers to which he will be exposed in the world—you need only give him *Goethe's Faust*, and desire him to read and reflect. The aged, grown grey in years, instead of detailing the results of their experience, will point to the book and say, it comprises all these things. . . . As a moral instructor, it ranks with the Cyropædia of Xenophon and the Telemachus of Fénelon," This insistence on the moral lesson and the didactic possibilities was typical of the English attitude, and, from the point of view of the publisher, it was perhaps the best way to tempt the book-buyer. But the *Outlines* have a special interest for us in that they stirred Shelley to enthusiasm, and he declared that he thought them "the only sort of translation of which Faust is susceptible." Nevertheless he himself translated in 1822 some fragments of the work, including the Prologue in Heaven and the *Walpurgisnacht*.

In 1823 appeared Lord Francis Leveson Gower's translation of the first part, of which Crabb Robinson had a poor opinion, but which a recent scholar has rightly attempted to rescue. Mr. Marshall Montgomery says "Lord Leveson Gower's conception of the depth and richness of *Faust*, as it appears in his version, leaves much to be desired, but let us remember and honour him as the 'écolier ambitieux' who made the discovery that Goethe's great dramatic poem was worthy of being rendered into our mother tongue, and had the courage to essay the task."[1]

During the twenties a few favourable voices were heard in the Reviews, but they did little to rouse interest in *Faust* before the

[1] *Studies in the Age of Goethe* (Oxford University Press, 1931).

advent of Carlyle. We may conclude with the words of William Taylor in his *Survey*: "The pious complain of its profaneness, the modest of its obscenity, the virtuous of its moral indifference, and the studious of its contemptuous satires on learning and acquirement: yet all allow that it has attraction and significance; that it displays a deep insight into the causes and motives of human conduct. . . . Every one forbids it to be read, yet each in his turn reads it; and if one does not rise the better, one rises at least the wiser, from its perusal." This sums up what the English in general thought of *Faust* at the time.

In the year 1824 appeared *Memoirs of Goëthe*, a translation of the first fifteen books of *Dichtung und Wahrheit*. Though the Preface states that the translation was executed from the original publication entitled *Aus meinem Leben*, there is no doubt that it was based mainly on a French version, and the translator seems to have known little German. The version was very inadequate, as was recognized by more than one reviewer, and Carlyle, in his essay on Goethe printed in 1828, admonished the translator in scathing terms: "It is our duty . . . to remark, if any one be still unaware of it, that the *Memoirs of Goethe*, published some years ago in London, can have no real concern with this Autobiography. The rage of hunger is an excuse for much; otherwise that German Translator, whom indignant reviewers have proved to know *no* German, were a highly reprehensible man. His work, it appears, is done from the French, and shows subtractions, and what is worse, additions. . . . If, warring with the reefs and breakers and cross eddies of Life, he still hover on this side the shadow of Night, and any word of ours might reach him, we would rather say: Courage, Brother! grow honest, and times will mend!"[1]

Some years before this, however, in June, 1816, there had been a slashing attack on the German edition by Jeffrey in *The*

[1] On the basis of a personal comparison of the *Memoirs of Goëthe* with Aubry de Vitry's *Mémoires de Goëthe*, Mr. Montgomery (*ibid.*) comes to the conclusion that "One may suppose that *Dichtung und Wahrheit* was on the translator's desk, but his eyes seem to have been mainly upon the *Mémoires*". He considers that the contemporary hostile criticism of the translation was not altogether just, and that the work, "however imperfect, was not without its own charm, nor, generally, in bad style".

Edinburgh Review, followed in March of the following year by a further criticism of the continuation. Goethe's novels were declared to be more interesting than his dramas, but equally artificial. Because of his interest in the Middle Ages, his romantic dramas were considered the best and his legendary ballads the most pleasing. But "he unfortunately imagines that his peculiar excellence lies in psychology. He is always anxious that his works should display his skill in anatomizing the heart and mind. And the way in which he goes about it, reminds us of an ancient Greek surgeon, demonstrating on the carcass of a dissected pig, and imagining that the entrails of the brute offer a faithful counterpart of the structure of the human body." Jeffrey regarded it as "a singular fact, that Goethe, whose mind is really capable of appreciating the sublime and beautiful, should at the same time labour under a complete inability of avoiding the ridiculous and the disgusting. . . . Goethe descants upon trifles, because he is so full of his own importance, that he is persuaded that nothing which relates to him can be considered insignificant. In contradiction to the well-known saying, he thinks that he *is* a hero in the eyes of his valet-de-chambre."

In the second review, the accusation of vanity is elaborated. "He appears to us to be always deficient in literary good-breeding—in literary decorum—in short, he does not display a real aristocratic feeling in his mind and habits . . . if we were to form an opinion of him from his works, . . . we could not help concluding, that he was so thoroughly impressed with his own consequence, that he never could forget—no, not for a moment, the means by which he acquired his dignity. He keeps his patent of nobility, broad seal, parchment and all, constantly hanging at his buttonhole."

This attack aroused indignation in Germany and England alike, and both *The Literary Gazette* (the founder of which, by the way, Henry Colburn, was the publisher of the anonymous *Memoirs of Goëthe*) in 1817 and *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* in the following year took up the cudgels on Goethe's behalf. The latter, in an article entitled "Observations on the critique of Goethe's Life in the Edinburgh Review", declared that "Without pretending to

say that the genius of Goethe is equal to that of Milton or Shakespeare, it is certain that his fame in Germany is, and always must be, of the same sort with theirs in England. . . . For many centuries Europe has witnessed no living reputation acquired by literature alone, which could sustain the slightest comparison with that enjoyed by Goethe", who was regarded as one "whose name will be reverenced by the world many hundred years after all the reviewers that ever insulted his genius shall be forgotten."

Carlyle, in the essay mentioned above, summarizes in such an illuminating manner the grounds on which the hostile reception of the autobiography was based, that his remarks are worth quoting further. "The *Dichtung und Wahrheit*" he says, "has been censured considerably in England; but not, we are inclined to believe, with any insight into its proper meaning. . . . The misfortune of the work among us was, that we did not know the narrator *before* his narrative. . . . We saw nothing of his situation; heard only the sound of his voice; and hearing it, never doubted but he must be perorating in official garments from the rostrum, instead of speaking trustfully by the fireside. . . . For the chief ground of offence seemed to be, that the story was not noble enough; that it entered on details of too poor and private a nature; verged here and there towards garrulity; was not, in one word, written in the style of what we call a *gentleman*. . . . As to this ignobleness and freedom of detail, especially, we may say, that, to a German, few accusations could appear more surprising than this, which, with us, constitutes the head and front of his offending. . . . Goethe, in his own country, far from being accused of undue familiarity towards his readers, had, up to that date, been labouring under precisely the opposite charge. It was his stateliness, his reserve, his indifference, his contempt for the public, that were censured."

Charles des Vœux, who moved intimately in Goethe's circle at Weimar, and with whom Ottilie fell in love,[1] published a translation of *Tasso* in 1827, but it was not much noticed by the reviewers. Goethe himself was much interested, however, and

[1] Cf. L. A. Willoughby: *An early Translation of Goethe's "Tasso"* in *The Modern Language Review* (vol. 9 ,1914).

both he and Ottilie collaborated in the making of it. Des Vœux had a special edition of one copy printed to send to Goethe, who thought the translation very good but doubted whether it was not too literal, and wrote to Carlyle to inquire "inwiefern dieser Tasso als *Englisch* gelten darf." Carlyle replied that he considered it "trivial, nay altogether unworthy", and that he had more than once had to turn to the original to discover the meaning. "In short," he said, "this translation is like our common translation from the German works; which no reader of that language ever willingly looks into; passable, or at least only mildly condemnable, when they deal with Kotzebues and Hoffmanns; but altogether *sacrilegious* when they fix on *Fausts* and *Tassos*." As Professor Willoughby points out, however, Carlyle's examination of the translation was most cursory, and we have seen in the case of Taylor of Norwich how unjust Carlyle could be to other workers in the same field, and even careless in the facts on which he based his criticism.

The year which saw the translation of *Dichtung und Wahrheit* saw also Carlyle's translation of *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre*, which was followed three years later, in the year of des Vœux's *Tasso*, by the *Wanderjahre*. The latter was translated from the 1821 edition and was consequently incomplete, as it did not contain the matter which Goethe added subsequently. Before this *Wilhelm Meister* seems to have been known to only a few people. A critic in *The Monthly Review* as far back as 1798 referred to it as a "comic novel". A little later in the same year the same journal discussed the book at greater length and printed translations of long passages concerning Shakespeare and *Hamlet*.

When Carlyle published his translation of the *Lehrjahre*, exactly fifty years had gone by since the appearance of *Werther*, but it was possible for him to say in his Preface that though Goethe had been "for half a century the admiration, we might almost say the idol of his countrymen, to us he is still a stranger. His name, long echoed and re-echoed through reviews and magazines, has become familiar to our ears: but it is a sound and nothing more; it excites no definite idea in any mind." The English public thought of him either, in his capacity as the author of *Werther*, as a "woebegone

hypochondriac," or, as the author of the first part of *Faust*, as a "wild mystic, a dealer in demonology and osteology," who obtained his effects with the aid of evil spirits and skeletons. Carlyle wrote to Jane Welsh after his translation had appeared that "*Meister* is growing a kind of small, very small *lion* in London: the newspapers puff him, the people read him, many venerate him very highly", but nevertheless the *Lehrjahre* was violently slated by Jeffrey and de Quincey. Other reviewers charged the book with being indecent, pervertedly mystical, and obscene, though there was at the same time some recognition of Goethe's knowledge and eminent position in the literature of his own country. Jeffrey, in *The Edinburgh Review*, declared that he had no intention of dictating to the Germans what they should think of their favourite authors, but proposed only "to let them know, in all plainness and modesty, what we, and we really believe most of our countrymen, actually think of this *chef-d'œuvre* of Teutonic genius." He then pronounced his verdict: "To us it certainly appears, after the most deliberate consideration, to be eminently absurd, puerile, incongruous, vulgar, and affected; and, though redeemed by considerable power of invention, and some traits of vivacity, to be so far from perfection, as to be, almost from beginning to end, one flagrant offence against every principle of taste, and every just rule of composition." He admitted the occasional "outbreakings of a fine speculation and gleams of a warm and sprightly imagination", but proceeded to a general condemnation of the German novelists whose works, he said, "smell, as it were, of groceries—of brown papers filled with greasy cakes and slices of bacon —and fryings in frowsy back parlours." He appreciated, however, the beauty of Mignon's song "Kennst du das Land" and had high praise for Goethe's criticism of the character of Hamlet. His concluding words modified his verdict: "On the whole, we close the book with some feelings of mollification towards its faults, and a disposition to abate, if possible, some part of the censure we were impelled to bestow on it at the beginning." He regarded the work as an instance of the diversity of national tastes, and wished to be understood as "holding it out as an object rather of wonder than of contempt; and though the greater part

certainly could not be endured, and indeed could not have been written in England, there are many passages of which any country might reasonably be proud, and which demonstrate, that if taste be local and variable, genius is permanent and universal."

This review gives the impression of having been written at the same time as the book was being read, and we seem to see Jeffrey being carried away by admiration of certain parts before he comes to the end and yet unwilling to go back and alter the criticism that he has already put down on paper. After having hurled the most destructive adjectives in his armoury, he suddenly launches an unexpected tribute to Goethe's universal genius and leaves us to wonder at the perversity, or perhaps we should say lack of scrupulousness, of the reviewer.

The translation of the *Wanderjahre* does not seem to have enlightened the critics as to the significance of the work as a whole, but among the poets Coleridge and Scott were somewhat impressed. William Taylor, who had called the *Lehrjahre* "a tedious planless novel", said of the sequel that "Picturesque descriptions, sage reflections, and poignant situations occur in all Göthe's writings; yet a senile garrulity creeps on him, his style is become more trailing, and those gushes of feeling, which refresh the soul, sparkle seldomer along the smoother but expanded current of his narrative." We can imagine how Carlyle's gorge must have risen at this ascription to his hero of "senile garrulity".

The criticisms of German literature in the Reviews are not necessarily to be regarded as typical of public opinion, but the attitude of these journals to Goethe and his writings during his lifetime affords an interesting study. The public was not allowed to forget Goethe's existence, though the Reviews were not always consistent in their praise or blame, and it must be borne in mind that much of the hostile criticism was contributed either by hacks, or by men of greater weight whose ignorance of Goethe's life and work was equalled only by their political, national or moral bias. Yet the Reviews, which were always anonymous, influenced public opinion, even though they were frequently based on translations only, and not on the originals. *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, founded in 1815 and edited by Lockhart, was consistently

favourable to Goethe, and *The Quarterly Review* adopted the same attitude when Lockhart took it over in 1826. *The Edinburgh Reveiw*, founded in 1802 under the editorship of Jeffrey, was violently hostile until Carlyle became a contributor in 1827. As early as 1819 *Blackwood's* spoke of the "matchless vision of reason and passion which characterizes the genius of . . . Goethe", and the changed attitude of the *Edinburgh*, apart from the celebrated collaboration of Carlyle, is visible in a review of the German edition of the correspondence between Schiller and Goethe in 1831. This is favourable throughout, discusses the difference in Goethe's outlook in his youth and in his maturer years, and is in striking contrast to the earlier spirit displayed by the *Edinburgh*. Goethe is said to be "more comprehensive in his views" than Schiller, "more diffusive in his sympathies", to have more subjects that interest him, to be "more tempered in his feelings, . . . often calm and composed where his friend was all fire and vehemence." Referring to Goethe's literary and moral opinions when he first came into contact with Schiller, the reviewer says that "some modification may since have been made, but the grand outlines continue the same. Already the fabric of his mind displayed that singular symmetry and harmony of parts, which, as when we look at St. Peter's, makes us for a moment forget its vastness."

The English view of Goethe was considerably affected by Madame de Staël's book *De l'Allemagne*, published in 1813, an earlier edition having been suppressed by the French authorities. An English translation appeared the same year. She put German literature, philosophy and manners in a light which made the English public realize that their view of the Germans had hitherto been distorted. She tried to give a picture of Goethe's mind and character, as well as an account of his dramatic writings; "c'est un homme dont l'esprit est universel," she said; and she introduced him in his maturity to a public that still thought of him as a young man who wrote books which were hostile to religion and morality and inculcated suicide and bigamy. "Goethe ne perd jamais terre, tout en atteignant aux conceptions les plus sublimes." She thought *Egmont* "la plus belle des tragédies de Goethe." Of *Faust*

she said, "il ne faut pas y chercher ni le goût, ni la mesure, ni l'art qui choisit et qui termine; mais si l'imagination pouvait se figurer un chaos intellectuel, tel que l'on a souvent décrit le chaos matériel, le *Faust* de Goethe devrait avoir été composé à cette époque. On ne saurait aller au delà, en fait de hardiesse de pensée, et le souvenir qui reste de cet écrit tient toujours un peu du vertige." This is how we should still expect *Faust* to impress the average Frenchman, but though Madame de Staël found certain faults of taste in the poem, and deprecated its being taken as a model, she admired it as poetry, as a work of the imagination, and as a stimulus to thought. The way in which her book was received by the reviewers is evidence of the changing attitude to German literature in general and to Goethe in particular, and the next two decades were to see Englishmen better equipped, both by knowledge of the German language and first-hand acquaintance with Germany, to interpret Goethe to their countrymen.

The term "Englishmen" is here used to denote the inhabitants of the British Isles, for it was, in fact, in great part due to *Scotsmen* that Goethe's fame crossed the water. Goethe himself said that only a Scotsman could understand the Germans, and an important factor in the awakening of a more enlightened interest in German literature was the reading by Henry Mackenzie of his paper on the German theatre to the Royal Society of Edinburgh in April, 1788. Mackenzie was an attorney and an author, his most celebrated work being the sentimental novel *The Man of Feeling*. He did not know German, and appears to have drawn his information from French sources. His references to Goethe's writings were commonplace, and he had nothing of any particular interest to say about them, though he waxed enthusiastic over Schiller's *Räuber*. Among those who attended the lecture, however, was Sir Walter Scott, who says that it "made much noise, and produced a powerful effect". It was not only the dramatic literature of Germany which began to arouse curiosity. Scott tells us that "their fictitious narratives, their ballad poetry, and other branches of their literature, which are particularly apt to bear the stamp of the extravagant and the supernatural, began to occupy the attention of the British literati".

This was the starting-point of Scott's interest in German literature, and he began to study the language in order to read the poets who had been mentioned by Mackenzie. The fame of Monk Lewis and an introduction to William Taylor's version of Bürger's ballad *Lenore* inspired him with the desire to write ballad poetry of his own, and he too translated *Lenore* as well as other poems of Bürger. Scott and Lewis met in 1798, and the former has recorded the elation he felt when "the Monk" invited him to dinner. A result of their friendship was their collaboration in the *Tales of Wonder* which, however, came out too late to meet with success, since the popular taste for the type of preternatural horror represented in these ballads had begun to wane. In translating *Erlkönig* Scott was interested mainly in the supernatural atmosphere. His translation of *Götz* has already been mentioned, and it was his interest in this play that led to the long series of romances in verse and prose which made him famous. It reinforced his interest in the Middle Ages, with all that insistence on circumstantial detail which forms such a striking part of his method. He was particularly impressed by the *Vehmgericht* scene, and he introduced the motive into both *The House of Aspen* and *Anne of Geierstein*. The influence of *Götz* on *The Lay of the Last Minstrel* and *Marmion*, for which Professor Brandl[1] adduces considerable evidence, is denied by Mr. Stokoe.[2] With reference to *The Lay* Brandl says that the principal features of the plot and of the characters bear an unmistakable resemblance to *Götz*; that Scott in great part borrowed from that play the general, human framework for his depiction of romantic detail; and that there is a similarity even in the method of composition. Stokoe, however, considers that many of Brandl's statements in this connection "will not bear scrutiny without losing the evidential value which they may seem, in his presentation, to possess", and he likewise denies that the manner of composition is imitated from *Götz*. He considers the influence on *Marmion* even more problematic ("Scott was possibly influenced by *Götz* in some of the broad outlines of the *Lay*

[1] *Goethe-Jahrbuch*, Bd. 3, 1882.

[2] F. W. Stokoe: *German Influence in the English Romantic Period* (Cambridge University Press, 1926).

of the Last Minstrel, and a few resemblances of detail between *Götz* and the *Lay* and *Marmion* may not be accidental"), though he is inclined to regard as "a plausible guess" Lockhart's suggestion that the original of the death-scene of Marmion is to be found in *Götz*.

The scene in *Ivanhoe* where Rebecca describes the assault on the castle of Torquilstone to the wounded knight is sufficiently reminiscent of a similar scene in *Götz* for Scott's indebtedness to be taken for granted. The scene in *Kenilworth* where the Earl of Leicester appears before Amy Robsart, muffled in the folds of a long riding-cloak but "dressed as princes when they ride abroad", was inspired by the scene in *Egmont* in which the hero of that tragedy comes to Klärchen dressed, under a concealing cloak, in magnificent costume and wearing the Order of the Golden Fleece. The idea of the character of Fenella in *Peveril of the Peak* came from Mignon in *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre*, as Scott acknowledged in the Introduction to his novel, though he states that "the copy will be found greatly different from my great prototype; nor can I be accused of borrowing anything, save the general ideas, from an author, the honour of his country, and an example to the authors of other kingdoms, to whom all must be proud to owe an obligation." From *Wilhelm Meister* came a further influence—that of the Harper's song—on the beginning of *The Lay of the Last Minstrel*.

Yet though Scott generally admired Goethe, to whom he owed much of his early inspiration, it cannot be said that he possessed any real understanding of the German poet and thinker, that he either comprehended or appreciated the aspects of Goethe's work which were of permanent significance. He was not influenced in either his outlook or his way of thinking, but was attracted mainly by the romantic elements in Goethe's poetry. He was drawn to him by his own medieval interests, and received stimulation only from such minor, incidental aspects as corresponded to his own tastes. In his diary in 1827, he noted: "Goethe is . . . a wonderful fellow—the Ariosto at once, and almost the Voltaire of Germany. Who could have told me thirty years ago I should correspond and be on something like an equal footing with the author of the

Goetz?" And in a letter to Goethe in the same year, he addressed the German poet as "one to whom all the authors of this generation have been so much obliged, that they are bound to look up to him with filial reverence."

Scott was here being a little over-polite, but there is no doubt of his sincere admiration, which was indeed mutual. Lockhart quotes at second-hand a remark made by Ottilie that when Goethe "got hold of one of Scott's romances, there was no speaking to him till he had finished the third volume; he was worse than any girl at a boarding-school with her first novel!"

Coleridge, of whom Professor Herford[1] has said that he possessed "without doubt the most German, in its instinctive postulates and modes of thinking, of all English minds of his generation," was offered in the year 1814 by Murray the publisher the sum of £100 to translate *Faust*. Though he declined the proposal, we are told in his *Table Talk* that he so far entertained it as to read the work through with great attention and to revive in his mind a former plan of writing a drama on a similar theme, but with Michael Scott as the chief character. He then considered whether he might not employ his time to better advantage by devoting himself to the composition of his own original Faust-drama, "and secondly," he said, "I debated with myself whether it became my moral character to render into English—and so far, certainly lend my countenance to language—much of which I thought vulgar, licentious, and blasphemous. I need not tell you that I never put pen to paper as a translator of Faust." This remark was made in 1833, but as long before that as 1810 Crabb Robinson tells us that Coleridge "conceded to Goethe universal talent, but felt a want of moral life to be the defect of his poetry." The same diarist informs us that in 1812 "Coleridge denied merit to *Tasso* and Wordsworth seemed to think low of him. Coleridge talked of the improbability of being a good poet without being a good man, and urged the immorality of Goethe's works as a proof he is not a good poet." Three months later Coleridge, in conversation with Robinson, "now acknowledged the genius of Goethe in a manner he never did before. At the same time the want of

[1] C. H. Herford: *Wordsworth* (Routledge, London, 1930).

religion and enthusiasm in Goethe is in Coleridge's mind an irreparable defect." In the following year Coleridge said "that if he seemed to depreciate Goethe, it was because he compared him with the greatest of poets. He thought Goethe had, from a sort of caprice, underrated the talent which in his youth he had so eminently displayed in his *Werther*, that of exhibiting man in a state of exalted sensibility. In after life he delighted to exhibit objects in which a pure sense of the beautiful was chiefly called into exercise, These purely *beautiful* objects, not objects of desire or passion, he coldly delighted to exhibit as a statuary does the succession of marble figures. And therefore Coleridge called Goethe *picturesque*." He was, however, "enraptured with *Wilhelm Meister*, but thinks the conclusion very bad. . . . He repeated 'Kennst du das Land' with tears in his eyes, and he praised the Song of the Harper which Walter Scott told Coleridge was the original of his Minstrel in the Lay." And in 1824 Robinson noted in his diary that Coleridge "set Goethe far below Schiller, allowing no other merit than that of exquisite taste, repeating his favourite reproach that Goethe wrote from an idea that a certain thing was to be done in a certain style, not from the fulness of sentiment on a certain subject. He treats Goethe with more plausibility as utterly unprincipled."[1]

Irreligion and immorality were the two faults which Coleridge found in Goethe and against which he appears to have been constantly protesting. We have no evidence that he appreciated either the aesthetic or the philosophic significance of *Faust* (his recorded utterances have reference only to the first part), and what we may take as his ultimate opinion is to be found in his *Table Talk* a year after Goethe's death. "There is neither causation nor progression in the Faust. . . . The sensuality and the thirst after knowledge are unconnected with each other. Mephistopheles and Margaret are excellent; but Faust himself is dull and meaningless . . . there is no whole in the poem; the scenes are mere magic-lantern pictures,

[1] Voluminous extracts from Crabb Robinson's Letters, Diaries and Journals will be found in F. Norman: *Henry Crabb Robinson and Goethe* (Publications of the English Goethe Society: New Series, vols. 6 and 8, London, 1930 and 1931).

and a large part of the work is to me very flat. . . . Goethe does not, nor ever will, command the common mind of the people of Germany as Schiller does. . . . In his ballads and lighter lyrics Goethe is most excellent. It is impossible to praise him too highly in this respect. I like the Wilhelm Meister the best of his prose works. . . . Although Wordsworth and Goethe are not much alike, to be sure, upon the whole; yet they both have this peculiarity of utter non-sympathy with the subjects of their poetry. They are always, both of them, spectators *ab extra*—feeling *for*, but never *with*, their characters. Schiller is a thousand times more *hearty* than Goethe."

Coleridge, we may note, took an interest in Goethe's theory of colour, the *Farbenlehre*. In a letter to Tieck in 1817 he refers to the "specific objections of the Mathematicians to Goethe's Farbenlehre as far as it is an attack on the *assumptions* of Newton. To me, I confess, Newton's positions . . . have always, and years before I ever heard of Goethe, appeared monstrous *Fictions*!"[1]

Though Wordsworth went to Germany with Coleridge in September, 1798, and spent the winter there, he displayed practically no interest whatever in German literature. He knew it chiefly in its more extravagant and sickly productions, and such of his references to Goethe's works as have come down to us are entirely disparaging. *Werther*, *Tasso*, *Iphigenie* and *Meister* incurred his dislike or active contempt. When discussing some of his contemporaries in 1827, he said, "I have tried to read Goethe. I never could succeed." In *Iphigenie* he recognized "none of the dignified simplicity, none of the health and vigour which the heroes and heroines of antiquity possess in the writings of Homer. The lines of Lucretius describing the immolation of Iphigenia are worth the whole of Goethe's long poem. Again, there is a profligacy, an inhuman sensuality, in his works which is utterly revolting. I am not intimately acquainted with them generally. But I take up my ground on the first cantos of *Wilhelm Meister*; and, as the attorney-general of human nature, I there indict him for wantonly outraging the sympathies of humanity . . . man is essentially a moral

[1] E. H. Zeydel: *Ludwig Tieck in England* (Princeton University Press, 1931). The letter is published for the first time in Professor Zeydel's book.

agent, and there is that immortal and unextinguishable yearning for something pure and spiritual which will plead against these poetical sensualists as long as man remains what he is." Crabb Robinson tells us that Wordsworth often tried his temper by his remarks on Goethe, of whom he spoke, in a conversation between the two as late as 1843, "with his usual bitterness, and I cannot deny that his objection is well-founded, that is, an extreme defect of religious sentiment, perhaps I should say, moral sense; and this suffices, says Wordsworth, to prove that he could be only a second-rate man. Wordsworth, however, does not deny that he is a great artist, but he adds this, in which I do not agree: 'In Shakespeare and Homer we are astonished at the universality of their penetration. They seem to embrace the whole world. Every form and variety of humanity they represent with equal truth. In Goethe you see that he attempts the same but he fails. . . .' Goethe's *Tasso* and his *Iphigenie* Wordsworth declares to be flat and insipid, but then he knows them only in translations. He has formerly said the same of *Hermann and Dorothea*. He expressed disgust at the Bride of Corinth."[1]

Unlike Coleridge, Wordsworth had only a slight knowledge of German, but his condemnation of Goethe was also chiefly on moral grounds. He really objected to the picture of Goethe's character that he had, on insufficient evidence, formed in his own mind.

Charles Lamb gained no good impression of *Faust* from the abstract given by Madame de Staël in her book, as he informed Coleridge in 1814; and in 1823, after reading an English translation, he expressed the view that has already been quoted above, namely that it was a "disagreeable canting tale of seduction". He thought one scene of Marlowe's play worth the whole of Goethe's.

The interest of Shelley in *Werther* and the odd attempt he made to improve upon it are discussed by his biographer Hogg, who says: "He was fascinated by 'The Sorrows of Werter' . . . and he was of opinion that a continuation, or rather an enlargement and amplification of the narrative, was demanded. Albert certainly

[1] F. Norman, *op. cit.*

ought to have made a splash; on the contrary, he exhibited a culpable indifference, in taking things coolly, like an honest German as he was. His wife was dear to him, no doubt, and with abundant reason; but so also were his sausage with cabbage, his Rhenish wine, his Bavarian beer, and especially his pipe. If, therefore, by an undue sensibility to the young ladies' (*sic*) vagaries, he had brought on an indigestion, or broken in upon the hours sacred to his tranquil enjoyments, he would have disturbed that balance and equipoise of soul which constitute the perfection of reason." Hogg prints a fragment of an "amplification", consisting of a long letter from Albert to Werther in which he offers friendly advice and reasons with the rejected suitor about his love for Lotte. This letter is terribly priggish, but Hogg has characterized it sufficiently in calling it "cold, bald, didactic, declamatory, rigid, frigid."[1]

Shelley, though he said that Coleridge was the only person living who could venture to translate *Faust*, himself turned the *Prolog im Himmel* and the *Walpurgisnacht* into English. He declared that he always read *Faust* with sensations which no other composition excited. Hazlitt, in a review of a volume of Shelley's posthumous poems in the *Edinburgh* in 1824, wrote, "If the present publication contained only the last two pieces in it, the *Prologue in Heaven* and the *May-day Night* of the Faust . . ., the intellectual world would receive it with an *All Hail!*" Hazlitt, however, like Lamb, preferred Marlowe.

German scholars have attempted to prove in individual cases the influence of various works of Goethe on Shelley's writings, but their zeal has been more noteworthy than the plausibility of their arguments.

Southey met Taylor of Norwich in 1798, and they formed a friendship which gave rise to some considerable correspondence between them. Taylor encouraged in him an interest in German literature, but though, as he informed C. H. Townshend in 1816, three years after he had been appointed Poet Laureate, he had left Westminster "in a perilous state—a heart full of feeling and poetry, a head full of Rousseau and Werter, and my religious

[1] T. J. Hogg: *The Life of Percy Bysshe Shelley* (London, 1858), vol. 2.

principles shaken by Gibbon", this interest was without significance for his work.[1]

Lord Byron knew hardly anything of the German language, and his acquaintance with Goethe's writings was confined mainly to *Werther* and the first part of *Faust*, read in translation. Madame de Staël's book impressed him with a sense of the greatness of Goethe, and we have seen that Monk Lewis read *Faust* to him in Switzerland in 1816, but he realized the inadequacy of his second-hand knowledge of the German poet and his works and said he would "give the world to read *Faust* in the original". Goethe in turn was deeply impressed when he read Byron's *Manfred* in 1817, and he wrote to Knebel "Dieser seltsame geistreiche Dichter hat meinen Faust in sich aufgenommen und für seine Hypochondrie die seltsamste Nahrung daraus gesogen. Er hat alle Motive auf seine Weise benutzt, so dass keins mehr dasselbige ist, und gerade deshalb kann ich seinen Geist nicht genug bewundern." A few months later he wrote in similar terms to Boisserée. Byron protested against the assumption that *Manfred* had been influenced by *Faust*, but his admiration for Goethe appears in three dedications which he addressed to him. The first was intended for *Marino Faliero*, though it was eventually omitted by Byron himself; the second was to have appeared in the first edition of *Sardanapalus*, but was likewise not printed, though through no fault of Byron's; the third was prefixed to *Werner*. The intended dedication to *Marino Faliero* was in the form of a long jocose letter to Goethe, in which he indulged in sarcasm at the expense of Wordsworth and Southey and then proceeded to testify to his sincere respect and admiration for Goethe "who for half a century has led the literature of a great nation, and will go down to posterity as the first literary Character of his Age." He continued, "You have been fortunate, Sir, not only in the writings which have illustrated your name, but in the name itself, as being sufficiently musical for the articulation of posterity. In this you have the advantage of some of your countrymen, whose names would perhaps be immortal also, if anybody could pronounce them." He finally

[1] C. C. Southey: *The Life and Correspondence of the late Robert Southey* (London, 1850), vol. 4.

expressed his conviction that Goethe was "by far the first literary Character which has existed in Europe since the death of Voltaire."

The second dedication was shorter—"To the illustrious Goëthe a stranger presumes to offer the homage of a literary vassal to his liege-Lord, the first of existing writers, who has created the literature of his own country and illustrated that of Europe." That which at last appeared in *Werner* was simply—"To the illustrious Goëthe, by one of his humblest admirers, this tragedy is dedicated."

The influence of Faust can be seen not only in *Manfred*, but also in *The Deformed Transformed* and possibly in *Cain*. But the only Goethe that Byron knew was the Goethe who in his youth had had analogies with himself, the Goethe of *Sturm und Drang*, and even his acquaintance with *Faust* amounted to little more than a one-sided apprehension of the incomplete work. The author of *Childe Harold* had much in common with the author of *Werther*, but the French Revolution and a generation of disillusionment lay between those two books. Goethe himself was not the same. The aged poet was impressed when Byron threw in his lot with the Greeks and was deeply moved by his death, but he thought that his young contemporary had acted unfortunately in endeavouring to realize an ideal. He introduced Byron into the second part of *Faust* in the figure of Euphorion, the child of Faust and Helena, and the dirge sung by the chorus of maidens was his tribute to the English poet's memory. If the two had ever met, however, we may be permitted to wonder to what extent their opinions of each other would have altered and, in particular, what would have been the effect on Byron of a more intimate acquaintance with the Goethe of *Wilhelm Meister* and the second part of *Faust*.

The interest of Carlyle in Germany was kindled by his reading of Madame de Staël's book in the year 1817. It opened up to him a new world of the mind and soul that he found far different from the prevailing tendencies in his own country, which were distasteful to him. He did not start to learn the language until 1819,

but as early as April, 1822, there appeared in *The New Edinburgh Review* his first essay on Goethe. He continued for a decade to contribute to various periodicals a series of articles on German literature in general, and Goethe in particular, which together with his translations introduced to the English world an aspect of Goethe of which it had hitherto been almost completely ignorant. He made his readers aware of a sage with a clarified mind and a new philosophic message. "In Goethe", he said, "we discover by far the most striking instance, in our time, of a writer who is, in strict speech, what Philosophy can call a Man. He is neither noble nor plebeian, neither liberal nor servile, nor infidel nor devotee; but the best excellence of *all* these, joined in pure union; 'a clear and universal *Man*.' Goethe's poetry is no separate faculty, no mental handicraft; but the voice of the whole harmonious manhood: nay it is the very harmony, the living and life-giving harmony of that rich manhood which forms his poetry. All good men may be called poets in act, or in word; all good poets are so in both. But Goethe besides appears to us as a person of that deep endowment, and gifted vision, of that experience also and sympathy in the ways of all men, which qualify him to stand forth, not only as the literary ornament, but in many respects too as the Teacher and exemplar of his age. For, to say nothing of his natural gifts, he has cultivated himself and his art, he has studied how to live and write, with a fidelity, an unwearied earnestness, of which there is no other living instance; of which, among British poets especially, Wordsworth alone offers any resemblance. And this in our view is the result: To our minds, in these soft melodious imaginings of his, there is embodied the Wisdom which is proper to this time; the beautiful, the religious Wisdom, which may still, with something of its old impressiveness, speak to the whole soul; still, in these hard, unbelieving utilitarian days, reveal to us glimpses of the Unseen but not unreal World, that so the Actual and the Ideal may again meet together, and clear Knowledge be again wedded to Religion, in the life and business of men."[1]

To put Goethe before the English public as "the Teacher and

[1] *Foreign Review* (1828).

exemplar of his age" demanded courage on the part of Carlyle, for, as we have seen, he was thought of in a very different capacity. But Carlyle smoothed the path by emphasizing the alleged religious nature of Goethe's teaching, for his advocacy would have been impossible without such allaying of the moral and religious scruples of his countrymen. He goes on, however, immediately to say: "Such is our conviction or persuasion with regard to the poetry of Goethe," and these words demonstrate his apparent blindness to Goethe as a poet. What has the estimation of Goethe's quality, which has just been quoted, to do with poetry? It is, to be sure, a characteristic of the Germans to endeavour to raise their poets to the status of leaders and teachers, but the English do not expect their poets to be philosophers and guides to the conduct of life.

Carlyle studied the works of Goethe deeply and his voice was authoritative. He interpreted him to a wider public in so far as his own peculiar limitations enabled him to do so, and with all the more sincerity because the German poet, or we should rather say philosopher, had helped him, in his own early years, to conquer the dissonance and despair which were threatening to master his soul. When he had finished his translation of *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* in 1824, he sent a copy to Goethe with a letter in which he confessed his debt to the Master. "Four years ago", he said, "when I read your *Faust* among the mountains of my native Scotland, I could not but fancy I might one day see you, and pour out before you, as before a Father, the woes and wanderings of a heart whose mysteries you seemed so thoroughly to comprehend, and could so beautifully represent. The hope of meeting you is still among my dreams. Many saints have been expunged from my literary Calendar since I first knew you; but your name still stands there, in characters more bright than ever." Goethe replied four months later by a letter in which he excused his delay on the grounds of his desire to study the translation and thus be in a position to send something more than an empty acknowledgment. He had not had the leisure to do so, but thanked Carlyle for his interest in his life and work and begged him to continue it in the future. Carlyle's pleasure at this reply is evident from the letter he wrote to Jane Welsh in the same year: "Conceive my

satisfaction: it was almost like a message from Fairy Land; I could scarcely think that *this was* the real hand and signature of that mysterious personage, whose name had floated through my fancy, like a sort of spell, since boyhood; whose thoughts had come to me in maturer years with almost the impressiveness of revelations." He asks Jane to copy the letter and her translation of it onto one leaf, "that the same sheet may contain some traces of him whom I most venerate and her whom I most love in this strangest of all possible worlds."

In later letters to Goethe he frequently emphasized what he owed to him. On the 15th of April, 1827, he wrote: "If I have been delivered from darkness into any measure of light, if I know aught of myself and my duties and destination, it is to the study of your writings more than to any other circumstance that I owe this; it is you more than any other man that I should always thank and reverence with the feeling of a Disciple to his Master, nay of a Son to his spiritual Father." Four months later he wrote: "Your Works have been a mirror to me; unasked and unhoped-for, your wisdom has counselled me; and so peace and health of Soul have visited me from afar." In June, 1831, the year before Goethe's death, he said that he thought daily of the man to whom, more than to any other living, he stood indebted and united. And in the last letter Goethe ever received from him, he again expressed the "endless gratitude I owe you; for it is by you that I have learned what worth there is in man for his brother-man; and how the 'open secret', though the most are blind to it, is still open for whoso has an eye." In this same letter we hear an acho of the progress of democracy in England, when the Reform Bill, a measure with which Goethe would have perhaps had little sympathy, was in process of being put on the statute book. Carlyle, who was then engaged in trying to find a publisher for *Sartor Resartus*, says: "the whole world here is dancing a Tarantula Dance of Political Reform, and has no ear left for Literature."

There was a gap of three years between Carlyle's first letter to Goethe and his second one, but then the correspondence continued until just before Goethe died. The two exchanged books and gifts, talked about domestic details of their respective households, and

Carlyle discussed the state of knowledge of German literature in England and, as we have seen, opened his heart to the older man. When the correspondence began, he was in his twenty-ninth year and Goethe was in his seventy-fifth.

Carlyle, on one occasion, asked Goethe for a testimonial to support his candidature for the Professorship of Moral Philosophy at the University of St. Andrews, "a situation", as he said, "of considerable emolument and respectability, in which certain of my friends flatter me that I might be useful to myself and others." Goethe sent the testimonial, in which, after some general remarks of an almost entirely irrelevant nature, he said that he had observed with pleasure "Herrn Carlyles bewundernswürdig tiefes Studium der deutschen Literatur" and considered he would be a worthy occupant of the Chair, who would enlighten the youth entrusted to him as to their true duties, introduce and stimulate their minds to moral activity, and lead them towards a religious consummation." Carlyle thought this a "magnanimous Testimonial, beautifully written," but nevertheless he did not receive the appointment. When Mrs. Carlyle sent Goethe a lock of her hair and begged one from him in return, he regretted his inability to comply with her request: "ich brauchte meinen Schädel nicht zu berühren," he wrote, "um zu wissen, dass daselbst nur Stoppeln sich hervortun."

On his last birthday Goethe received from Carlyle, on behalf of a number of men of letters who called themselves "Fifteen English Friends", and included, besides Carlyle himself, Wordsworth, Southey, Scott, Lockhart and a few editors of Reviews, a signet seal in the shape of a star encircled by a serpent, the symbol of eternity, with the motto *Ohne Hast, aber ohne Rast.* The accompanying letter said that the "undersigned, feeling towards the Poet Goethe as the spiritually-taught towards their spiritual teacher, are desirous to express that sentiment openly and in common." Some of the fifteen, however, we know were not particularly interested in Goethe, and the presentation, which was made at the instigation of Carlyle, who designed the seal, is not particularly significant as a sign of Goethe-enthusiasm in this country. The only one of them who received any spiritual

enlightenment from Goethe was Carlyle himself, and the majority probably signed the letter out of mere politeness.

Crabb Robinson called Carlyle in 1832 "a deep-thinking German who contrives to unite his almost idolatrous admiration of Goethe with the profession of a sort of religion though mixed with sentimental metaphysics", yet the disciple had his moments of impatience with the Master, especially when he was engaged on his translation of *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre*. He found it a laborious business, and it sometimes strained his enthusiasm to the limit. He wrote to Jane Welsh: "Some parts of *Meister* are very stupid, and it is all very difficult to translate." And later: "I go on with Goethes *Wilhelm Meister*, a book which I love not, which I am sure will never sell, but which I am determined to print and finish. There are touches of the very highest, most ethereal genius in it; but diluted with floods of insipidity. . . . I sit down to it every night at six, with the ferocity of a hyena." He returned to the hyena simile in a letter to James Johnstone: "When I read of players and libidinous actresses and their sorry pasteboard apparatus for beautifying and enlivening the 'moral world', I render it into grammatical English—with a feeling mild and charitable as that of a starving hyena. . . . No mortal will ever buy a copy of it. *N'importe*!. . . . Goethe is the greatest genius that has lived for a century, and the greatest ass that has lived for three. I could sometimes fall down and worship him; at other times I could kick him out of the room."

The translation of the *Lehrjahre* was followed three years later by that of the *Wanderjahre*, but before this Carlyle had conceived the idea of writing an autobiographical novel in the manner of *Werther*. It did not come to anything, though he discussed it with Jane Welsh and thought of enlisting her collaboration. After his marriage he composed some chapters of a novel called *Wotton Reinfred*, which was likewise autobiographical and somewhat Wertherian in temper, though the didactic mood preponderated.

Goethe and Carlyle were two such totally different natures that the reason for their mutual attraction, but particularly for Carlyle's veneration of the older man, is somewhat of a puzzle.

Their personal intercourse was essentially limited, being only by correspondence, for Carlyle never visited Weimar, though he longed to do so, and he, in fact, misunderstood the nature of Goethe's individuality and thought. Goethe's friendship and encouragement were of all the greater value to him, since he enjoyed them during the years when he was an obscure writer and had still to make his way in the world, but he looked at Goethe across his own temperament and what he saw was the incorporation of the ideal that he had set up in his own mind. Goethe led him to the "Everlasting Yea", and taught him the duty of self-renunciation and the healing power of useful activity, but his interpretation of Goethe's teaching was a distortion that accorded with his own spiritual inclination. We can trace in *Sartor Resartus* the moulding of his mind, his journey from the "Everlasting No", through the "Centre of Indifference", to the "Everlasting Yea", from the Negative Pole to the Positive. It was chiefly in *Wilhelm Meister* that he found the positive attitude to life, which he opposed to the materialistic and mechanistic conceptions of his contemporaries. Goethe was to him the perfect type, the man who had attained to a harmony of mind and soul, who had, after coming to grips with the spiritual problems of life, achieved the highest wisdom. But the ideal of Puritan renunciation arrived at by Carlyle was foreign to Goethe's make-up. Goethe was not the apostle of renunciation in the ascetic, repressive sense that Carlyle imagined, and the dour Scot was deriving comfort and hope from a faith and philosophy with which his Master would have had little sympathy. Goethe as a poet, Goethe as a literary artist, meant little or nothing to him. When he quoted from the poem *Generalbeichte* the lines "im Ganzen, Guten, Schönen, resolut zu leben", he misquoted "im Ganzen, Guten, *Wahren*". "The beautiful" was altered to "the true", and this was characteristic of his insistence on the moral aspect, for Goethe was to him almost exclusively a moral teacher and an exemplar of the way to live. In the obituary he contributed to *The New Monthly Magazine* in 1832, he wrote: "That Goethe was a great Teacher of men means already that he was a good man; that he had himself learned; in the school of experience

had striven and proved victorious." And in his inaugural address as Lord Rector of the University of Edinburgh in 1866, he told the students that there were ten pages of *Wilhelm Meisters Wanderjahre* which, if ambition had been his only rule, he would rather have written than all the books that had appeared since he came into the world. They were the pages dealing with the Three Reverences. He concluded with a quotation of the masonic hymn *Symbolum*, the last line of which contains a message of hope, *Wir heissen euch hoffen*. It was in Goethe that Carlyle found the gospel of work and renunciation which had meant so much to his own mental health, and which he tried to pass on to his contemporaries and to posterity.

GOETHE'S REPUTATION IN ENGLAND SINCE 1832

by W. H. Bruford

1. FROM GOETHE'S DEATH TO 1886

WITH the two essays of 1832 Carlyle had virtually accomplished the task he had set himself of interpreting and popularizing Goethe in England, though incidental references to Goethe are frequent in his later writings and in his letters, which give us some idea of Carlyle's personal influence in the next fifty years. His conception of Goethe as an ethical and spiritual guide is to be found in one writer after another right down to the end of the century. Even in 1917 John Morley wrote in his *Recollections* that "Goethe, so widely counted 'Europe's sagest head', might well be said to be the founder, guide and oracle of an informal, nameless and unorganized communion of his own". It was not only about Goethe that Carlyle's view was generally accepted, but about "noble, patient, pious and solid" Germany generally, the land of poets and thinkers, which had preserved a spiritual outlook on life despite the decay of creeds and the rapid social and political changes of the times. Even before Carlyle, "Mme de Staël's *De l'Allemagne* had, like the *Germania* of Tacitus, unveiled an idealized picture of an unknown fairyland to the astonished gaze of Europe", as Professor Schirmer has put it, and the prestige of German scholarship and poetry in England was never so high

as in these middle decades of the nineteenth century, though the range of names known was small and grew very slowly. The friendly political relations between the two countries and the Queen's German marriage certainly favoured this development, at least indirectly. John Sterling, one of Carlyle's most devoted disciples, in his article on *The Characteristics of German Genius* (1842), gave expression to views which held the field undisputed down to the Franco-Prussian War in his statement that German literature had succeeded to the place formerly occupied by the great writers of France and "gained a universal importance". Sterling saw the root of all the merit of the Germans in their moral earnestness, and held their dominant idea to be that of the worth of man.

It is significant that all the English writers who speak with the greatest admiration of Goethe in this period came to him, as Carlyle had done, when for one reason or another they could no longer fully accept the Christian tradition in which they had been brought up. At the same time others, who remained in the Church, like J. C. Hare, one of the leaders of the Broad Church movement, found new inspiration in German scholarship and theology, but the outstanding fact of course was the more liberal or even radical attitude of the Germans in theology. "To them I owe my ability to believe in Christianity with a much more implicit and intelligent faith", said Hare, who was deeply influenced by Schleiermacher in particular. Some, like Sterling, a pupil of Hare's at Cambridge (1824–27), passed on from liberal theology to Goethe as interpreted by Carlyle, and thus to Spinoza. J. A. Froude the historian was another of these. His brother Hurrell had been a leader of the Oxford Movement and he himself entered the Church, but was unsettled first by German theology and then by Carlyle, Goethe and Spinoza. His *Nemesis of Faith* (1849) was one of the first of the many novels of the Victorian age which reflected their authors' religious conflicts, and its hero reminds us strongly of Werther. Matthew Arnold at about the same time was developing on similar lines. His father had been influenced as a historian by Niebuhr, and in his liberal Christianity by thinkers like C. K. J. von Bunsen. At Oxford Matthew Arnold was introduced to Goethe's work by Carlyle,

and he continued to see him through Carlyle's eyes. In 1848 we find him, at the age of twenty-six, returning with admiration to Goethe's life and contrasting Goethe's superior intellectual equipment with that of Wordsworth, and in 1850 he is studying Spinoza with profit. In his essay on Heine he expresses admiration for "Goethe's profound, imperturbable naturalism", and in the Spinoza essay he says: "Spinoza first impresses Goethe and any man like Goethe, and then he composes him", explaining that what Goethe had admired in Spinoza had been his denial of final causes and his stoicism. It is as "Europe's sagest head" that he celebrates him in *Memorial Verses* (1850), and as "in the width, depth and richness of his criticism of life, by far our greatest modern man", and chiefly for that reason "the greatest poet of modern times", in *A French Critic of Goethe*. Here speaks the apostle of culture, for Arnold's whole conception of culture was profoundly influenced by Goethe. There are in his works numerous references to and quotations from Goethe, who in Arnold's view had helped "to supply a new spiritual basis" for human life, yet Arnold always fought shy of a full-length study of him, and never discussed at all thoroughly the aesthetic aspect of his achievement.

There is little one can point to in Arnold's poetic work which is directly inspired by Goethe, but his friend A. H. Clough, to judge by his writings, was more impressed by the poetry than by the thought of Goethe. He does not constantly quote Goethe as Arnold does, but in the dialogue *Dipsychus* he expresses his divided soul in a form which clearly owes something to Goethe's *Faust*. The brooding title-figure reminds us immediately of Faust, especially because of the contrast, on which the effect of the poem depends, between him and a Mephistophelian "spirit", his *alter ego*, who sardonically accepts the behaviour of the all-too-human Venetian crowd, while Dipsychus, in a spirit very remote from that of Goethe in Venice, deplores their nihilistic abandonment to the moment, which is for him a proof that "Christ has not risen", that is, that for his time the Christian message has lost its meaning. If there is a central thought in the poem, it is the good Goethean doctrine that the answer to doubt lies in action. Clough translated a few short poems of Goethe and like him wrote a

modern epic in hexameters, though it was a serio-comic one, more directly inspired by Longfellow's *Evangeline*.

Sterling belonged to a Cambridge group interested in Goethe and German scholarship in the late twenties, largely through the influence of Hare, reinforced by Carlyle. Froude, Arnold and Clough were Oxford men round about 1840, when religion, after the Oxford Movement, was again a burning issue. Twenty years later there came a third wave of interest in Goethe and German philosophy, also starting from Oxford. This was at the time of *Essays and Reviews* (1860), the expression of liberal theological views held by leading minds in the Church of England, a year after the publication of *The Origin of Species*. During the intervening twenty years the Broad Church party, including men like Hare, F. D. Maurice and Professor Benjamin Jowett, one of the contributors to *Essays and Reviews*, had been much impressed by advanced German theology. J. A. Symonds, who was a student at Balliol at this time, where Jowett was his tutor, says that everyone talked theology at Oxford, even at breakfast parties or on the river. They were more radical now in their Humanism than the preceding generation, but just as nostalgic for faith as Clough in *Easter Day* or Arnold in *Stanzas from the Grande Chartreuse*. Symonds passed through a prolonged crisis of doubt which lasted till he was thirty. He found some peace of mind in the Alps, where he finally settled for reasons of health. There he felt, if not God, at least greatness. But in the development of his eclectic philosophy of life, Goethe and the Stoics were all-important. He found the key to Goethe in the poem *Proömion* (the introduction to *Gott und Welt*), brought to his notice by T. H. Green, whose head was full of German Idealism after his studies at Heidelberg. Symonds found peace in a *Weltfrömmigkeit* which gave a deeper meaning for him to his work as a historian of art, and he sketched a "philosophy of evolution" in an essay which took as its text the hymn of Cleanthes the Stoic and Goethe's *Proömion*, finely translated here by Symonds himself. T. H. Green, who married Symonds's sister, became the leading Hegelian at Oxford. His "lay sermons", of which we are given an impression in those of Henry Grey in *Robert Elsmere*, Mrs. Humphrey Ward's very popular novel

about a minister assailed by doubts, were inspired by the idealistic humanism of that great movement of German thought, extending from Lessing through Goethe and Schiller to Hegel, which was based, as Sterling said, on the idea of "the worth of man".

Mrs. Humphrey Ward was the niece of Matthew Arnold. There were ties of kinship, and others due to a common educational background and way of life, a life that allowed them sufficient means and leisure for travel, opportunities for a wide acquaintance with art, literature and wild nature, and a certain detachment, between many of these leading families of the upper middle class in England who found in Goethe and kindred German spirits a congenial philosophy. Walter Pater, a contemporary of Symonds at Oxford and another pupil of Jowett's, is also clearly in the line of descent from Arnold and Carlyle. He too had a high admiration for Goethe and often quoted him, but, unlike Symonds, he rather deplored Goothe's passion for science, and through his exclusive preoccupation with the aesthetic he arrived at a philosophy of life which Goethe would certainly not have recognized as akin to his own. He too, after thoughts of a Church career, had found Oxford's influence fatal to his orthodoxy, though ritualism claimed him later.

All these admirers of Goethe were more or less direct disciples of Carlyle, and like him they found in Goethe above all a spiritual guide in a troubled age, when the ever-increasing materialism and "philistinism" of Victorian England made sensitive minds, if they could not reconcile scientific knowledge with orthodox belief, more and more receptive to a high-minded humanism which tended to make of culture a substitute for religion. Such an attitude naturally aroused much opposition. Many who were led by Carlyle to read Goethe took exception to his writings, as his first English critics had done, on moral grounds, and arrived at an unfavourable view of his personality as a whole. These differences came out clearly in the discussion aroused by the epoch-making *Life of Goethe* published by G. H. Lewes in 1855.

G. H. Lewes was not only a competent scientist and philosopher, but also a most versatile writer and a literary critic with imaginative insight. His biography of Goethe was the first full-

length "life and works" worthy of the subject, and it has worn well. There is no better introduction to Goethe even to-day, though of course some details need to be revised in the light of later research. It not only presented Goethe, as Carlyle had done, as sage and moralist, but it brought out clearly the merits of the literary artist and the scientist, and Lewes tried to interpret Goethe's complex personality with a more open mind than his English predecessors. The German background was studied by Lewes, accompanied by George Eliot, in Weimar itself, only twenty years after Goethe's death, and the result was one of the best general studies of a great poet that we possess. The book was widely read and proved second in importance only to Carlyle's essays for stimulating interest in Goethe and appreciation of the man and his work. There were still however many English readers who, though deeply impressed by Goethe, felt a little uncomfortable in his presence. Walter Bagehot a little before this, in his Shakespeare essay (1850), had said of Goethe: "He moved hither and thither through life, but he was always a man apart. . . . In every scene he was there, and he made it clear that he was there, with a reserve, and as a stranger. He went there to *experience*. . . . No scene and no subject were to him what Scotland and Scotch nature were to Sir Walter Scott". George Eliot, though she admired Goethe and often quoted him, approved of this criticism. One of the first points made in R. H. Hutton's review of Lewes in *The Spectator*, (republished in his *Literary Essays*), was his mention of the repellent effect produced on many by Goethe's calm independence of so much on which they themselves helplessly leaned. He saw Goethe as one who had "habitually evaded the task of fathoming the meaning and depth of suffering". "He writes like a man who had not only experienced but explored every reality of human life except that of anguish and remorse". He had a "thoroughly kindly nature, but one quite unvisited by any devoted affection". Accordingly in the Friederike affair and all the affairs that followed "he preferred to be passively hampered by a wounded heart to being actively hampered by an affectionate wife. . . . He wished for love with limited liability". This excessive detachment explained why "his poetry is perfect until it rises to

the dramatic regions where moral actions are involved, and a moral faith therefore needed". Like Bagehot, Hutton quotes with approval Niebuhr's description of *Wilhelm Meister* as a "menagerie of tame animals", and finds Arnold's praise of him (in the *Memorial Verses*) excessive, for he regards him as "perhaps the wisest man totally without moral humility and personal faith whom the world has ever seen". Sarah Austin's essay on *Goethe's Character and Moral Influence* (1857) takes a rather similar line, though her earlier book, *Characteristics of Goethe* (1833) had done much to make Goethe known.

This note is very familiar in English criticism of Goethe, which strikes a Frenchman like Professor Carré (*Goethe en Angleterre*) as so narrowly moralistic. Even D. G. Rossetti, reading *Wilhelm Meister* about this time, writes to a friend: "On one page *Wilhelm* is in despair about some girl he has been the death of; in the next you are delighted with his enlarged views of Hamlet. Nothing, plainly, is so fatal to the duty of self-culture as self-sacrifice, even to the measure of a grain of mustard-seed". F. D. Maurice, writing to Kingsley in 1855, finds this reaction so strong that he thinks "the day of self-culture is over", but, as we have seen, in the sixties a whole group of Oxford men saw in Goethe "a steady guiding star" (J. A. Symonds). Besides the writers mentioned above we find among Goethe's Victorian admirers many philosophers, including Edward Caird who wrote a well-balanced paper on *Goethe and Philosophy*, and among theologians Mandell Creighton, later Bishop of London, who as a young man built up a whole moral philosophy on the notion of *Entsagung* derived from Goethe. And all through these years a Scottish enthusiast for Goethe and German literature, J. S. Blackie, who after studying in Germany had produced a verse translation of *Faust* in 1834, was by various articles and in lectures winning admirers for *The Wisdom of Goethe*. This was the title of a selection of translated passages which he made in 1883, with a long introduction on Goethe's personality largely devoted to the question of his alleged selfishness, especially in "the rich story of his loves". He replies to some of Hutton's criticisms and concludes that Goethe, apart from a few human failings, was "the model of a perfectly wise and virtuous man".

To turn now to the translations of Goethe's works published since Carlyle's *Wilhelm Meister*, we may note first A. Hayward's prose *Faust* (1833), one of the best prose versions, which the author revised with the help of leading German scholars and writers, and followed up, over forty years later, with a life of Goethe (1878). The next year saw the publication not only of Blackie's version, the best of the early verse translations except for Shelley's magnificent fragments, but also of two other verse translations, one by J. Sime and one anonymous. There was one in 1835 by J. Anster, and another in 1839 by Robert Talbot. All of these were of the First Part only, but an anonymous verse translation of both parts appeared in 1838 and a verse translation of the Second Part by L. J. Bernays in 1839. There were at least two dozen other versions, mainly of Part I, before the melodramatic adaptation by W. G. Wills which made *Faust* for the first time really known on the English stage when it was produced by Irving at the Lyceum in 1886. The best were those by Anna Swanwick (Part I in 1850, Parts I and II in 1879), Sir Theodore Martin (Part I in 1866, Part II in 1886), and the American Bayard Taylor (Part I in 1871, Part II in 1873). The Lyceum performance evoked no fewer than fifteen major articles or books, but there had been a trickle of articles since Carlyle's time, taking in general the same line as the authors already discussed, all of whom regarded *Faust* as Goethe's central work. More and more it came to be looked upon, especially by "humanists" such as these, as "the Divine Comedy of the new age" (H. S. Bluhm).

The impossible task of translating the lyrical poems was gallantly attempted by one after another. Among the best-known collections are those by W. E. Aytoun and Theodore Martin (in *Blackwood's Magazine* from 1844) and Edgar Bowring (1853). Of *Über allen Gipfeln* and some ballads dozens of translations have been listed by diligent researchers, and certainly far more have been attempted, but few even faintly suggest the magic of Goethe's verse.[1] Translations of epic works, like that of *Hermann und*

[1] See L. Van T. Simmons, *op. cit.* and Stella M. Hinz, *Goethe's Lyric Poems in English Translation after* 1860. (University of Wisconsin Studies in Language and Literature, No. 26, Madison, 1928).

Dorothea by the philosopher W. Whewell (1839), were more successful. No collected edition of Goethe's principal works in English translation has yet appeared, but fourteen volumes appeared in Bohn's Standard Library between 1848 and 1890. Though by the second half of the nineteenth century Goethe was recognized in England as one of the supreme poets and thinkers of the world, a classic whom every cultivated man should know, it is probable that there were never very many who actually read him. He had not become, and is never likely to become, anything like so popular in England as Shakespeare is in Germany This is due in part to the different nature of his work, but also to the absence of translations comparable in quality with the Schlegel-Tieck versions of Shakespeare.

The effect of Goethe on English poets was far slighter than we might have expected from all the attention that his work attracted from translators and essayists. Most of the leading poets of the mid-Victorian age expressed high admiration of his art, notably Tennyson, who often spoke of him and counted him among the great poets who are also sages, like Aeschylus, Shakespeare and Dante, though on one occasion he also called him "a glorious devil". We know through F. T. Palgrave which were his favourite poems. *In Memoriam* is full of Goethe, seen through the eyes of Carlyle, and it is to him, as Tennyson tells us himself, that the opening lines refer:

> I held it truth with one who sings
> To one clear harp in divers tones,
> That men may rise on stepping-stones
> Of their dead selves to higher things,

though it is perhaps rather a commonplace meaning that Tennyson sees in Goethe's words "von Änderungen zu höheren Änderungen". There are several appreciative references to Goethe in the correspondence of Robert Browning with Elizabeth Barrett, and his *Paracelsus* (1835), appearing as it did immediately after the spate of translations which followed Goethe's death, inevitably reminded readers, in the general choice of subject, the character of the hero, and in many details, of *Faust*. What

Tennyson called "the higher pantheism" is again in evidence, the effort to reach a new spirituality of *this* world by the conception of "God glorified in man". Browning gave the name of *Festus* to one of the friends of Paracelsus and the same name was used by P. J. Bailey in 1839 as the title of his visionary metaphysical poem, the first edition of which was widely acclaimed as a great work, and which in fifty years appeared in eleven English editions and many American ones and swelled to a monstrosity of 40,000 verses. It has the cosmic framework of *Faust* and is in a dramatic form obviously modelled on Goethe. Beginning with a Prologue in Heaven, it takes us through the world to Hell. Festus and Lucifer represent man's eternal struggle with evil, which here too is interpreted as a means to good. But only the longing of the age for a new religion can explain how this rhetoric was ever taken for poetry. The unpretentious *Dipsychus* of Clough, similarly inspired, is much more attractive.

We have seen that there are specific references to Goethe in Matthew Arnold's verse as well as his prose, and one is frequently reminded of him in reading Arnold, but more by the attitude to life that is implied than by any aesthetic influence. Several Victorian novelists show clearer traces of Goethe's influence. Bulwer Lytton for instance began in the twenties with a kind of *Werther* in letters (*Falkland*) and followed it up with several *Bildungsromane* recalling *Wilhelm Meister*, such as *Pelham* (1828), *The Disowned* (1829), *Paul Clifford* (1830), and especially *Ernest Maltravers* (1837) and its continuation *Alice* (1838). Disraeli's *Vivian Grey* (1827) and *Contarini Fleming* (1832) are the same kind of thing. Even George Meredith, who had been at school in Germany for a time, was obviously acquainted with *Wilhelm Meister*, as we see from *The Ordeal of Richard Feverel* or *Beauchamp's Career*. He admired particularly Goethe's "high discernment" and had many times come into contact with him in spirit, he told Morley, and been ennobled. Thackeray lived in Weimar for a time as a young man and met Goethe, but though German pictures suggested by Weimar come into *Vanity Fair*, he was not deeply affected by Goethe. His humorous verses on *Werther*, about Charlotte, the "well-conducted person" who, after her lover's

death, "went on cutting bread and butter", are of course not evidence one way or the other.

2. FROM 1886 TO THE PRESENT DAY

Eighteen-eighty-six was not only the year of Irving's Lyceum production, which had a run of some four hundred nights and gave *Faust* a new vogue on the British stage, making Goethe more discussed in the magazines than for many a year. It also saw the formation of the English Goethe Society under the presidentship of Max Müller, as a parallel body to the German *Goethe-Gesellschaft* founded in the previous year. For a time the Society had branches in various parts of the country, and the parent society continued to be active until 1914, led both by academic teachers—such as Dowden, Herford, Blackie, A. W. Ward, Stuart Headlam, Oscar Browning—whose main interests were in other fields than German and by the professors and lecturers, not yet very numerous, who were concerned with the academic teaching of German and German literature, such as Karl Breul, H. G. Fieldler, and J. G. Robertson. An indefatigable secretary was found in Dr. E. Oswald and German residents in London were active supporters. Papers on Goethe and related subjects were read by these and other scholars and published in the *Transactions* of the society. Goethe the thinker continued to interest many of the best minds in the country, including now scientists like T. H. Huxley and J. Tyndall. The historian J. R. Seeley published as a book in 1894, with the title *Goethe Reviewed after Sixty Years*, an expanded version of articles written ten years earlier. J. R. Seeley, as the author not only of *The Expansion of England*, but also of *Ecce Homo*, was another member of the "nameless communion" and he still saw in Goethe the great teacher of the latest renaissance, but though emphasizing the sage in him, he tried to do justice to the singer too and to rebut the charge of selfishness brought against Goethe the man by Hutton. Nothing better had been written about Goethe since Lewes than this sane and well-pondered book.

Translations came in a trickle from the eighties onwards, but there were still far more than can be recorded fully here.

There were two more versions of *Faust I*, for instance, in 1880 (by J. A. Bird and by T. E. Webb). Bird did Part II in 1889. There were several more before the end of the century. In the present century we have had a complete verse translation from A. G. Latham (Part I in 1902, Part II in 1905; later in one volume in Everyman's Library). Part I in this version was acted at Arnold Freeman's Sheffield Educational Settlement in 1924, where *Iphigenie* in Anna Swanwick's translation was also gallantly attempted in 1927. In 1924 too the Old Vic staged a *Faust*, mainly Part I, in a version by Graham and Tristan Rawson, incorporating passages from Shelley, Bird, Blackie and Martin. The same text was used later in New York and in Dublin. Perhaps the liveliest of all English verse translations of Part I is that of G. M. Cookson (1927). There are long extracts in Stawell and Dickinson's *Goethe and Faust* from a complete translation of *Faust* that was never published. Those from Part II are particularly successful. Individual lyrical poems have continued to lure translators, mainly in magazines and anthologies. Over forty versions of *Über allen Gipfeln* and over thirty of *Erlkönig*, for instance, have been counted since 1860. The most notable collection of lyrical translations is Dowden's excellent *Divan* (1913). Some prose works too have been re-translated, *Wilhelm Meisters Apprenticeship*, for example, by R. D. Boylan, for the Bohn edition (1875), and the *Travels*, by Edward Bell (1882). *Wilhelm Meisters Theatrical Mission* was translated by G. A. Page in 1913, a few years after the German manuscript had been rediscovered. The only scholarly translation of *Werther* was made by William Rose in 1929.

In spite of the English Goethe Society however, in spite of the continuation of translations and of references to Goethe in scholarly works, it is clear that Goethe was no longer the living source of inspiration for young creative minds that he had been in mid-century. German science and scholarship were more influential than ever, and a steady stream of young graduates went to German universities for advanced study, but by the nineties the attitude to German literature had changed, and France was regaining her old hold over English writers. The emergence of Germany as a political power and a potential commercial rival

had certainly a great deal to do with this change. The disappointment which was expressed by admirers of the "Germany of poets and thinkers" like Arnold, on visiting the real Germany, shows the way the wind was blowing. It became increasingly common to contrast the old Germany, symbolized by Weimar, with the new, symbolized by Potsdam, an over-simplification still, but an inevitable reaction to the unrealistic view of Goethe's Germany as a soul without a body. Apart from scholarly work on Goethe, like Edward Dowden's seven articles in *New Studies in Literature* (1895) and *Essays Modern and Elizabethan* (1910), fragments of an uncompleted life of Goethe which would have taken high rank for its sensitive understanding, there were a certain number of magazine articles on Goethe, about five a year at the turn of the century, and about half as many in the decade before 1914.

In 1912 Professor J. G. Robertson wrote his *Goethe and the Twentieth Century*, the first of his general studies of Goethe, culminating in his revised *Life and Work* in 1932. In 1913 C. H. Herford, after reading notable papers to the English Goethe Society, also produced a short but tightly packed *Goethe*. During the war, with the inevitable reaction against everything German, the theory of the Two Germanies was often put forward again, notably by the spirited controversialist J. M. Robertson (*The Germans*, 1916) and more judicially in *German Culture*, edited by the Edinburgh theologian W. P. Paterson in 1915. In such presentations Goethe was always extolled as the greatest representative of what is lasting in Germany's contribution to European civilization. There were some who renewed the attack on Goethe's egoism, and others who defended him. Immediately after the war there appeared a new two-volume *Life of Goethe* by the Edinburgh historian P. Hume Brown, with a chapter on *Faust II* by Viscount Haldane, whose acknowledgment of his intellectual debt to Germany had so often been brought up against him by political opponents before and during the war. He abated nothing of his admiration for Goethe, but he made the familiar distinction between the *Lernvolk* of Goethe's day and the *Tatvolk* of his own, and hoped for a revival of the old spirit. Like Morley's tribute in his *Recollections* (1917) this biography was a product of the

enthusiasm of the older generation. English writings on Goethe were coming to be more and more the work of those who, as university teachers and specialists in German literature, were concerned with him critically in their professional capacity and did not regard his writings any longer as a sort of gospel.

The reaction against the nineteenth-century view of Goethe, associated for the post-war literary man with Carlyle and the "Eminent Victorians" satirized by Lytton Strachey, is to be seen even in Max Beerbohm, who had made his name well before 1900. For him, Goethe, the Goethe of the *Travels in Italy* at least, was a little too pompous, a good subject for urbane mockery, like Queen Victoria. But though one might well expect such an attitude from one who acknowledged himself proudly as a product of the naughty nineties and could be lyrical about music-halls, there is something that is more than individual in the fun he makes, in the essay *Quia Imperfectum* (1919), of Goethe in the Campagna. The twentieth-century Englishman did not like those who seemed to him to take themselves too seriously. It is interesting to compare what Dowden had said in 1895 about the Tischbein portrait and what Max Beerbohm says here. Dowden had seen in Goethe's face "the calm which possessed his spirit, and that earnestness without severity which at this time characterized him. Through his eyes we read the union of energy and repose in a great spirit." But Max Beerbohm imagines from reading Goethe's *Travels in Italy* (for he had not seen the picture), that "the expression of the face is perfectly, epitomically, that of a great man surveying a great alien scene and gauging its import not without a keen sense of its dramatic conjunction with himself", and he comments: "Of Goethe we are shy for such reasons as that he was never injudicious, never lazy, always in his best form—and always in love with some lady or another just so much as was good for the development of his soul and his art, but never more than that by a tittle". This, after Hutton and Rossetti, has a familiar ring. Here is the same note again in a letter of D. H. Lawrence to Mr. Aldous Huxley (March 27th, 1928):—"I think *Wilhelm Meister* is amazing as a book of peculiar immorality, the perversity of intellectualized sex, and the utter incapacity for any development of

contact with any other human being, which is peculiarly bourgeois and Goethean. Goethe began millions of intimacies, but never got beyond the how-do-you-do stage, then fell off into his own boundless ego. He perverted himself into perfection and God-likeness".

Mr. T. S. Eliot, in the few brief references he has made to Goethe in his critical essays, also displays a strong prejudice against him, though he has no doubt about his importance in the history of poetry and thought. "I do not know of any standard", he wrote in 1946, "by which one could gauge the relative greatness of Goethe and Wordsworth as *poets*, but the total work of Goethe has a scope which makes him a greater *man*. And no English poet contemporary with Wordsworth can enter into competition with Goethe at all. Whenever a Virgil, a Dante, a Shakespeare, a Goethe is born, the whole future of European poetry is altered". Arnold would have accepted every word of this, in fact he said very much the same himself. But it is clear from earlier utterances that though Mr. Eliot dates an epoch from Goethe, he detests the effects of Goethe's influence, especially, no doubt, the humanism of which we have spoken earlier, the religious cult of Goethe. "Goethe always rouses a strong sentiment of disbelief in what he says: Dante does not" (*Dante*, 1929). It is still the content, the implication as to religious belief, with which he is pre-occupied, as Carlyle and Arnold were, but Eliot reverses the sign in front of the quantity represented by Goethe, and makes it negative. He prefers, for instance, Baudelaire. "In the middle of the nineteenth century, the age which (at its best) Goethe had prefigured, the age of . . . scientific progress, humanitarianism and revolutions which improved nothing, Baudelaire perceived that what really matters is Sin and Redemption"—which takes us back to Hutton again.

It is significant that Mr. Eliot never refers to Goethe's lyrical poetry, except to say that Goethe ought not to have written poetry at all: "his true role was that of the man of the world and sage, a La Bruyère, a Vauvenargues". Mr. Stephen Spender (in *The Destructive Element*, 1935) says that " to Eliot, as to most modern writers, nature, except in the sense of Georgian nature poetry, does not seem to exist. When one notices this, one also begins to understand certain of Eliot's dislikes. His dislike of Lawrence

seems inevitable, but his dislike of Goethe becomes a little clearer when one realizes how unsympathetic to the cerebral writer must be such lines as the following from *Faust:*

> Vom Eise befreit sind Strom und Bäche
> Durch des Frühlings holden, belebenden Blick. . . ."

Mr. Spender, who is more fully aware of the German poetic tradition than perhaps any other modern English poet, appreciates the things in Goethe which those who read him in German can appreciate, the lyrical magnificence of *Faust*, the hymns in free rhythms (he has finely translated *Das Göttliche*), the *West-östlicher Divan*, though a statement he makes about Goethe's poetic development is surely in need of some qualification: "Goethe is a writer who began with romantic inventions, and who at the end of his life, in such poetry as the *West-östlicher Divan*, revealed his sense of the immediate reality of the outer world around him". Mr. Spender points out how profoundly Joyce was influenced by *Faust*. The last three-quarters of *Ulysses*, he says, is all in the *Walpurgisnacht* mood, not only the dramatic section, where the resemblance to the corresponding scene in *Faust* is obvious.

Joyce of course had a good knowledge of German, and, like Mr. Spender too, had lived in a German-speaking country. Contact with the language and the life of Germany seems to be necessary for any Englishman to arrive at an appreciation of Goethe at all resembling that of the Germans themselves. Translations are not enough, and a knowledge of German is unfortunately not acquired in England by anything like the number who learn English in Germany. That is one reason for the comparative neglect of Germany's national poet in this country. Yet even if we could translate Goethe as Schlegel did Shakespeare, it seems inconceivable, as we have suggested, that Goethe would ever attain the universality of Shakespeare's appeal, for he does not possess it in his own country. It is natural therefore that since the establishment of German as a university subject the great bulk of what has been written in English about Goethe has been the work of scholars specializing in the study of German literature, but there have been valuable contributions from others too,

especially round about the year 1932, when the centenary of his death was widely celebrated. A word or two about British Goethe-scholarship in the last quarter of a century may fittingly bring this survey to a close.

In 1923 the English Goethe Society was revived, with Viscount Haldane as its President. Guided chiefly by Professor J. G. Robertson and later by Professor L. A. Willoughby, it has been the principal organ and stimulus of British Germanistic studies, and the numerous volumes of its *Publications* (New Series) are almost entirely the work of the second generation of university teachers of German in this country. The question of Anglo-German literary relations is naturally to the fore, with studies of Goethe and Byron, Goethe and Matthew Arnold, Goethe and Crabb Robinson, but many aspects of the literature and general culture of the age of Goethe have been the subject of searching studies. The centenary of Goethe's death provoked three or four books and a great crop of magazine articles, some sixty at least, more than had appeared in the preceding third of the century. The books were a popular life by H. W. Nevinson, the veteran journalist, another by F. W. Felkin, then the ripe fruit of Professor Robertson's fine scholarship in his *Life and Work of Goethe*, and a striking study of *Goethe as Revealed in his Poetry* by Professor Barker Fairley. To the anonymous author of a penetrating centenary article in *The Times Literary Supplement* it seemed that through having become an idol of the Victorians, Goethe had disappeared with them. The centenary *Lives* by Nevinson and Robertson therefore, he thought, both suggested that Goethe must stand or fall as a poet alone, his "wisdom" having been found wanting. He considered their conception of Goethe to be romantic, the one biographer presenting him as lyricist and amorist, and the other as above all a creative artist. "Mr. Nevinson, in a true romantic fashion, puts his telescope to a blind eye when other elements in Goethe appear on the horizon: Professor Robertson, more scrupulous, admits their existence, but only to deplore it". The exposition of *Faust* by Mr. Lowes Dickinson and Miss Stawell that had appeared in 1928, in its attempt to get at the whole man as revealed in *Faust*, had been more on the right

lines. Professor Fairley, approaching Goethe through his poetry, seemed to think that by making a detour the chasm that had opened up between us and Goethe could be avoided. His was a valuable contribution, but the critic urged that a poet does not exist simply to write great poetry, to give us thrills, and that Goethe was in fact a great poet who *grew out* of poetry. "His significance lies, fundamentally, in the emergence of an attitude, a *Weltanschauung*, and the self-creation of a great man."

This brief summary gives at least an impression of the directions, for there were several, in which critical opinion was moving in 1932. The centenary was appropriately celebrated, particularly in university towns, by lectures and performances of the *Urfaust*. There was even a Government luncheon at the House of Commons and a Government reception at Fishmongers' Hall. On all these occasions the idea of international understanding through cultural exchanges, for which no one ever did more than Goethe, with his great conception of *Weltliteratur*, was duly emphasized, though Goethe would have been surprised and disappointed to find European culture more deeply divided by national differences than ever. Then in 1933 the veil began to descend again. In his own country Goethe was either misrepresented or cold-shouldered by most of those who followed the official National Socialist line, and in Britain he again became the concern of a comparatively small number of university students and their teachers. The English Goethe Society continued its work, until it was again interrupted by war. Professor E. M. Butler, with the new tyranny before her eyes, suggested in *The Tyranny of Greece over Germany* (1935) that Winckelmann, Goethe, Hölderlin and the rest had made a kind of religion of a false conception of the Greeks, to the detriment of their poetry. The 1932 *Times Literary Supplement* reviewer would probably have found her criticism of Goethe romantic too. Meanwhile Mr. H. Trevelyan was making a close study of what Goethe really knew of the Greeks, the fruits of which he published in his *Goethe and the Greeks* in 1941.

Again after a disastrous war the English Goethe Society has resumed its activities, and again at the prompting of the calendar

we are preparing to pay tribute to the poet for whom national hatred was an impossibility, shoring some fragments of his serenity against our ruins and hoping that his spirit may be more and more widely diffused in our troubled world. A remarkable feature of recent years is the attention that Rilke has attracted among English poets and lovers of literature. Hölderlin too has been discovered by some. If German poets as introspective and untranslatable as these can arouse genuine enthusiasm, it might seem there is still hope of a revival of interest in the poet Goethe. Professor Fairley has reminded us, in *A Study of Goethe* (1948) complementary to his earlier book, that "his poetry and his philosophy or rather his poetry and philosophy together, the two being not easily separable without loss to either, derive their value from being integrated with the problem of living". Rejecting the romantic view of Goethe, "which would have preferred to have him go to pieces at all costs like a good poet rather than make a success of things", he stoutly maintains the relevance of Goethe to our modern problems and invites us to rejoice at what he made of himself, instead of vainly wishing that he had been different. He attaches great importance to Goethe's scientific studies as a corrective to his preoccupation with himself, and reminds us again of his miraculous "awareness" of all aspects of life and what lies behind them. He recalls Goethe's claim, in 1831, that whoever had read his works and entered into the spirit of them would find that they had given him a certain freedom of mind. That is not a gift that the modern world can despise. Nor have we yet learnt all the "vital and fruitful things" he can teach us "concerning forms, forms which each in his own generation must fill with new content". This is the approach to Goethe of Professor Willoughby in recent studies, such as his Taylorian lecture, *Unity and Continuity in Goethe*, an examination of Goethe's search for form, a symbolic quality, in all the experiences of life. It cannot be said that Goethe has lost any of his fascination for the experts, and they display a refreshing variety and breadth of interests in their discussion of him, but in spite of all their efforts it remains true that to the average educated Englishman Goethe is little more than a name.

IF it be true what S. H. Goodnight says in his University of Wisconsin study on *German Literature in American Magazines Prior to 1846* (1907), that America owes more to the cultural association with Germanic civilization than it does to any other except that of the mother country, then a study of the impact of Goethe, perhaps the greatest Germanic mind of all times, upon American criticism and thought should be eminently worth while. But it must also be clear at the outset that the introduction of the products of a great mind like Goethe's into an environment as alien to it as was early federal America, was bound to be attended with difficulties and misconceptions.

When Goethe was beginning to establish his reputation as an international figure in the world of letters with *Götz von Berlichingen* and *Die Leiden des jungen Werthers* between 1771 and 1774, that is, on the very eve of the American Revolution, the American colonies, deeply engrossed in political matters, were hardly disposed to pay much heed to a young German writer who was just winning his spurs, or to his contemporaries. No evidence has yet come to light to refute this statement. But so far as early American, and also British, knowledge of German books

and letters in general is concerned, our views are, at this very moment, undergoing an altogether radical revision. This belated change is due chiefly to the searching investigations of Harold S. Jantz, an American scholar who has been devoting himself to the subject intensively during the past ten years. It remains true that American education before the Revolution was English in spirit and tradition and that almost all American schools of the eighteenth century, at least in New England, were modelled upon English patterns. However, we must now reject the age-worn tale that Madame de Staël's famous book and the work of Charles Villers on the German universities, which first aroused the young Bostonians, Ticknor, Everett, Cogswell, and their friends, to an interest in German literature and led to their pilgrimages to Göttingen from 1815 on, gave also the first impetus to American interest in German. Consequently, the more or less intensive study of German in the cultural centres of New England which ensued upon their return from about 1817 on, and the introduction of German instruction at Harvard College in 1825 by Karl Follen, while not to be denied, can no longer be claimed as pioneering steps.

The researches of Jantz have set back the time of the introduction of German books into America, and, we assume, their study and influence, to the very earliest colonial era. He finds that there was a large, continuous, and significant stream of knowledge of German thought available in New England practically from the time the Pilgrims landed there. Among the early pioneers of German in New England were Robert Child; Governor John Winthrop, the younger; his son and grandson, Wait and John; and the Mathers—Increase, Cotton, and Samuel. Jantz also finds that this initial interest in things German lasted almost throughout the seventeenth century and then fell off, but gradually increased again in the eighteenth, reaching a new high point in the seventeen-nineties.

To be sure, no cultural unity can be claimed for the American colonies, even as late as 1774, when *Werther* appeared. What applies to New England and its centre, Boston, does not necessarily hold for either New York or Philadelphia, not to mention

the Jamestown colony, about which we know very little in this regard. In Dutch New York there was already a goodly sprinkling of Germans in the seventeenth century, and in Quaker Philadelphia and Teutonic Germantown German instruction was presumably offered at the latest by the middle of the eighteenth century in the Public Academy, if we are to rely upon the curriculum of Benjamin Franklin. By 1753, certainly, this academy boasted a Professor of German. There was also a German Seminary in Philadelphia at this time. The fact that both institutions failed shortly after the Revolution stamps them admittedly as sporadic phenomena, but even so they were not without significance for their time. Although there is at present no direct evidence that Goethe's early works were available and known in New York or Philadelphia by 1774—just as such evidence is lacking in Boston—yet it is not impossible that copies of *Götz*, *Werther*, and *Clavigo* were to be found in the libraries of recently immigrated German families at that time. Definite proof of a knowledge of these works in the cities mentioned is, however, wanting.

Certain facts pertaining to the earliest acquaintance with Goethe in America are, nevertheless, known. Riesbeck's *Briefe eines reisenden Franzosen über Deutschland* (the Frenchman was Riesbeck himself) was translated soon after 1780. A London edition, prepared by the Rev. P. H. Maty, appeared in 1787, but there may have been earlier printings. At any rate this work, which contains an informative chapter on Goethe and Weimar, became well known in America before 1790. The first of at least eight eighteenth-century American *Werther* editions, reprints, it seems, of the inferior British Malthus translation (1779), appeared in Philadelphia in 1784. A genuine Werther craze followed and gave rise to a score of poems inspired by the novel, most of them very sympathetic and characteristic of the hyper-emotional sentimentalism of the age, as well as to new editions of the Malthus translation (followed later by the Pratt and Gifford versions), performances of the poor play on the subject by the Englishman, Reynolds, and a host of *Wertheriaden* the most famous of which is the English *Letters of Charlotte* by William

James. This work was curiously but not deservedly honoured by being translated into German.

To repeat the statement of most of the earlier writers on the fortunes of *Werther* in America, that its popularity there was shortlived, would be misleading. Judging by the number of reprints and variations on the theme of *Werther* that have come to light—on the average about one every year or so—the novel remained in vogue until well into the eighteen-thirties. Its "fiery spirit of enthusiasm" and sensibility were highly praised in a British article, reprinted with approval in *The Massachusetts Magazine* in 1795. A writer in *The Literary Magazine and American Register* of Philadelphia in 1806 was deeply concerned about its deleterious influence upon American youth; other early critics regretted its lack of a salutary moral and of a religious tenor; wits and wags arose to parody it in true Nicolaiesque fashion. But its popularity over a period of fifty years persisted. Even George Washington seems to have been affected by the *Werther* vogue. In his mansion on the bank of the Potomac in Virginia is to be found a miniature depicting a scene from the novel.

However, it need hardly be stressed that faddish popularity, born of morbid sensationalism, and true appreciation, the child of comprehension, lie worlds apart. There is no shred of evidence that any American of that time found in the work those qualities which we admire in it to-day. For us even to expect this would be anachronistic. Except for a handful of Goethe's own German contemporaries, how many Germans of that day could truly appreciate its peculiar greatness as a literary masterpiece of international proportions? For Americans of the same era, at least, the piousness, sweet sentiment, and bucolic strains of Salomon Gessner were still much more congenial and intelligible.

If we follow Jantz, we will agree, then, that the early Goethe vogue in America coincided with the second peak of American interest in German literature and thought. This peak was, to be sure, not yet high enough to win the day completely. Far from it. A lengthy and in a sense significant article on "The Literary Wit and Taste of the European Nations" appearing in *The Colombian Magazine* of Philadelphia in 1788 still betrays total ignorance of

German letters. Nor should a favourable five-page review of Goethe's *Clavigo*, reprinted from a British journal in *The Massachusetts Magazine* in 1795, be taken too seriously. Much more important is the interest of William Bentley, a Massachusetts divine, in things German during the early decades after the Revolution. He possessed an excellent collection of German books (among them an incomplete set of Goethe) and a good knowledge of German. Indeed, his interest was a living one, for he carried on an active correspondence with the Hamburg scholar, Christoph Daniel Ebeling (whose library later came to America), and succeeded in disseminating his enthusiasm among his friends and parishioners in Salem. As early as 1800 he expressed this, as far as it goes, unimpeachable judgment in *The Impartial Register*: "As to the works of Wieland and Goethe, they have long been in the hands of the public, and are not open to the charge of conspiracy against Church and State. Like works of genius both ancient and modern, they have opinions which will not be universally received. But their genius will be revered." This might well have formed as solid a basis for the introduction of German literature into the young Republic as any foreign literature could well expect.

Among the finest works of the first half of Goethe's life are his lyric poems. But if we search for early American appreciation of Goethe the lyrist, we are doomed to disappointment. An American version of *Erlkönig*, appearing in Philadelphia in 1798, seems to be the first Goethean poem to be essayed. The pure lyrics were apparently not attempted in America until two generations later, and even the other popular ballads—*Heidenröslein*, *Der Fischer*, *Das Veilchen*, and *Der König in Thule*—were not translated until twenty-five years after. Only a much later period, beginning about 1840, witnessed the more frequent appearance in English dress of shorter Goethean poems in the United States. With the exception of Longfellow and Bryant, poets of note were even then but rarely attracted to Goethe as translators, and to this day the number of excellently Englished lyrics or ballads of perhaps the greatest lyrical genius of all time may be counted on one's fingers. This is no doubt the most disappointing aspect of

Goethe's reception in America. Whether it is due to the virtual untranslatability of his lyrical quality is a question that can hardly be decided here.[1]

One might have expected the other great work of Goethe's Storm and Stress, the drama *Götz von Berlichingen*, which became known to the general German public a year before *Werther*, to have found at least a slight echo in the struggling young Republic, if for no other reason than because of its glorification of liberty. For, in the final analysis, Goethe was inspired in *Götz* by the same forces which animated the framers of the American Declaration of Independence. But no such early American interest in Goethe's dramatic glorification of the crude but idealistic self-helper has become apparent. Indeed, the two late-eighteenth-century British translations of the play, by Mrs. Rose Lawrence (*née* d'Aguilar) and Sir Walter Scott, seem to have escaped the notice of American critics at the time of their appearance, and not until 1814 did an American edition of Scott's inferior rendering appear in Philadelphia. The first independent American translation, lengthily reviewed in *The National Gazette and Literary Register*, came out as late as 1837.

A subsequent American influence of Goethe's *Götz*, as indirect and curious as it is sinister, can be traced. It falls into the period immediately after the Civil War between North and South (1861–65) over the question of slavery. In 1865, after the negro slaves had been set free in the defeated southern states, disgruntled young southern gentlemen, casting about for means of repressing the so-called Carpet Baggers and the negroes, formed the notorious Ku Klux Klan. They borrowed the idea from Scott's novel *Anne of Geierstein* (1828–29), Book II, Chapter 2, in which a Secret Tribunal metes out bloody justice to miscreants. Now since Scott tells us several times in his book that he derived the idea from the "Vehmic tribunals of Westphalia", as revived by Goethe in Act 5 of *Götz*, we must, in the final analysis, credit the

[1] Cf. L. Van T. Simmons: *Goethe's Lyric Poems in English Translation prior to* 1860 (University of Wisconsin Studies in Language and Literature, No. 6, Madison, 1919), and for the later period the parallel work of Stella M. Hinz, same series, No. 26, 1928.

latter with being the unwitting instigator not only of the original Klan of the sixties, but also of its more recent and even more pernicious counterpart as revived at the time of the appearance of Thomas Dixon's novel, *The Clansman*!

The first fifteen years of the nineteenth century reveal but little serious interest in, and even less understanding for, German literature in America. We encounter adverse criticism of *Werther* and *Die Wahlverwandtschaften* as immoral works, and the judgment that *Hermann und Dorothea* deals with an ill-chosen and unpalatable subject. The opinions expressed reveal a modicum of first-hand knowledge and clear indication of dependence upon British sources. As late as 1816 the Baltimore *Portico* called Gessner far superior to Goethe. But from 1817 on the first young Americans who had gone to Germany to study returned home. Those who have already been mentioned were followed by others, among them, Motley, Bancroft, Hedge (who went over at the tender age of twelve), Calvert, and J. F. Clarke, not to speak of Longfellow and Lowell. Their mission, so far as Germany is concerned, is comparable to that performed by Carlyle in England. They fought prejudice with enthusiasm and facts. In 1817 Everett brought many German books back from Göttingen and gave them to Harvard; in 1818 Goethe presented the college with a set of his complete works in thirty volumes, and in the same year Cogswell, who like Ticknor and Everett had met the sage of Weimar, wrote to him that many young students in Cambridge already knew German. From 1825 on, when Karl Follen served first as teacher and then as professor at Harvard, great progress was made in the knowledge of German. Follen (who was, however, not an advocate of Goethe) was ably seconded in his efforts by Francis Lieber and, in Virginia, by Professor Blättermann.

The results of the work done by the Göttingen group during the period from 1817 to 1832 can perhaps best be appraised in the articles which appeared in such journals as *The North American Review*, *The Christian Examiner*, *The American Quarterly Review*, and *The American Monthly Magazine*. Here Goethe acquired a new meaning as poet and thinker. Here were original points of

view. But notwithstanding, he remained essentially "immoral" and was still far from being accepted without qualification. Even men like Ticknor, Everett, and Bancroft voiced protests against his laxity in morals. A lengthy article in *The American Quarterly Review*, published in parts in 1827 and 1828, is the best of the period by virtue of its accuracy and understanding.

From 1833 till 1845 German influence made itself ever more strongly felt in the United States. It has been said that by 1840 most educated Bostonians could discuss German philosophy, literature and music glibly. In the same year the clergyman Theodore Parker, like Emerson, Channing, and Hedge an adherent of the important New England Unitarian group, spoke of a veritable "German craze". Not that German culture was now having an easy time of it. Men like Andrew Norton and Henry Ware, both noted New England divines, were radical opponents of German letters and thought, especially as represented by Goethe. Indeed, with but a few noteworthy exceptions, all American Goethe criticism through the middle of the forties shows a remarkable sameness. In a fashion, Goethe has become well known, is frequently discussed, and has gained a certain influence, especially on those of liberal Unitarian or transcendental trends. But usually praise, sometimes of a high order, is not far removed from severe criticism and stern questioning.

Goethe, as a rule, bore the brunt of all the carping and cavilling at German literature in general. Respected as an author, artist and genius of great profundity and universality, but much less known as a true poet, he was utterly condemned again and again as a man whose life did not measure up to the standards of morality—not only of the Puritan kind, but of morality *per se*. As is natural in such cases, the less first-hand knowledge of Goethe a critic possessed, the more severe was his attitude. To most American writers of this time, then, Goethe was a sort of straw-man, an effigy of a worldling. They knew nothing of his humanitarianism and love for the common folk, his social optimism, his deep-seated conscience, his reverence and need for noble womanhood, and of the role which sorrow and suffering—*das Leid*—had played in his life. They saw only the proud, haughty genius who rode roughshod

over convention. Even men like Parker called him selfish, debauched, and epicurean, with little sympathy for man's noblest ideals. Even women like Margaret Fuller, an ardent admirer of Goethe and the translator of Eckermann, found in him a lack of "the sweetness of piety and insight into nature's sacred secret".

The opinion that American rejection of Goethe was due largely to the Puritanical philosophy of life which supposedly prevailed in New England far into the nineteenth century has been so often repeated that it is now accepted as a truism. It seems appropriate, though, to question it. No doubt Puritanism and intolerance in the sphere of morality were formidable factors in early America. Some vestiges of a Puritan tradition survived. But it seems doubtful whether they account, more than in part, for the strictures against Goethe.

In so far as American judgments of Goethe were coloured by British judgments, they could not be claimed as of Puritanical origin, for not Puritanism but Victorianism was now a vital factor in England. Moreover, the states south of New England, especially Pennsylvania, whence some of the criticism stems, represented a blending of Quaker and German elements, in no sense dependent upon Boston. It seems more plausible to explain the American attitude toward Goethe on natural grounds. They include the difficulty of understanding any man of his stature on the basis of flimsy evidence, and the difference in the *mores* of the two countries, one with an old, highly developed civilization, the other a newly emerging colossus with Anglo-Saxon traditions. Moreover, most American Goethe friends, including Hedge, Brooks, Emerson, Longfellow, Bancroft, and Whittier, were religionists, and as such they looked at Goethe.

This is hardly the place to dilate upon these matters. One fact, though, should be remembered. Even in Germany, there existed, at that time, no crystallized opinion in Goethe's favour. We have merely to mention the name of that anti-Goethean firebrand, Wolfgang Menzel, who incidentally figured as an important authority on Goethe in the America of 1840; we need only recall the activism and realism of the Young Germans of the thirties as a group, who charged Goethe's poetry of personal

culture, so free of *Tendenz* and pathos, and so concerned for the eternal primal feelings of man, with being cold and meaningless; we may refer also to the recent researches of a California scholar, William J. Mulloy, who has thrown much light upon the querulous attitude taken toward Goethe by most German Catholic writers from 1850 to 1870. In the light of these circumstances, is it not surprising to find even those qualifiedly favourable American reactions to Goethe that we do discover? We have noted the statement of Bentley made as early as 1800. Fairminded and understanding later utterances by Motley and Hedge, and Margaret Fuller, also of New England, could be quoted. And J. F. Clarke of Kentucky, then far off in the backwoods, wrote in 1836 that Goethe was "a genius as original as Shakespeare and as widely influential as Voltaire". That Clarke had studied at Harvard and been in Germany is not as important to remember as that he was here addressing a typical frontier audience in Louisville.

Perhaps there will be no better way of arriving at some idea of what America's best and most respected early nineteenth-century minds, in so far as they were informed concerning Goethe, thought about him, than to consider the gradually forming opinions of three such leaders, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, and James Russell Lowell.[1] In the case of these men we are dealing not with casual writers who penned occasional articles in ephemeral periodical magazines, displaying only an average knowledge of their subject. They were literary men of exceptional ability and force. To this day they have left their marks upon American letters. Two of them were essayists of note. The other was a poet, highly respected and widely read in his own day, who then suffered eclipse for a few generations, only to emerge more recently as a very estimable poet—a noble representative of the age in which he lived. So far as their knowledge of Germany, German literature, and in particular Goethe is concerned, it may fairly be said that all three had some first-hand

[1] Cf. Frederick B. Wahr: *Emerson and Goethe* (University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, 1915); James Taft Hatfield: *New Light on Longfellow, with special reference to his relations to Germany* (Boston and New York, 1933); and George Wurfl: *Lowell's Debt to Goethe, a study of literary influence* (Pennsylvania State College Studies I, 2, 1936).

competence in the language, its literature, and especially Goethe's writings, while two of them were well acquainted with the country and its people through repeated visits.

Emerson's recognition of Goethe was slow to come to full fruition. Upon first acquaintance with his works he found him interesting to a high degree but negative in character. During the early stages of Emerson's occupation with German letters—and he always regarded Goethe as their centre—he found himself severely handicapped on three counts. That was during the middle of the thirties. He was still woefully deficient in his knowledge of the German language. Though an independent thinker prone to form his own opinions from first-hand evidence, so far as it was available, he was confronted with strong prejudices against Goethe held by those whom he knew best and trusted most. Finally, Emerson himself was reared and lived amid surroundings not conducive to a full appreciation of a genius of Goethe's mould and background. The term Puritanism, though partially describing Emerson's ways of thinking, does not do him full justice. A peculiarly American form of Christian Unitarian liberalism which will, however, brook no compromises in the realm of morality, and a stern democratic idealism which, though studiously tolerant, yet fails to comprehend alien traditions, no matter how venerable or historically sound they may be—these are two important factors in Emerson's world-view. They are not inevitably Puritanical, but in effect quite possibly intolerant and certainly parochial.

It was in 1835 that Emerson, who was already dabbling in German, received the advice from his eminent correspondent and friend, Carlyle, to study German for the express purpose of gaining a first-hand knowledge of Goethe's works. It seems that this advice was immediately and zealously taken by Emerson, then over thirty. Indeed, five years later we are informed that he has read fifty-five volumes of Goethe's writings—certainly an egregious example of counsel literally taken! Unfortunately Emerson's knowledge of German *via* Goethe was almost exclusively self-acquired and bore all the earmarks of autodidacticism. As a result, he never really progressed beyond a bare reading

knowledge of German, with probably a barbarous pronunciation and only the faintest feeling for the music of the idiom. It is difficult to rid oneself of the idea that there was always a wall between Emerson and Goethe, the wall of language. Little wonder, then, that he always preferred English translations, as he himself frankly confessed.

At first, from 1834 to 1837, Emerson's remarks on Goethe showed mixed feelings. He then held that Goethe had led a "velvet life", sheltered from the buffets of fortune, and that he was not therefore qualified to judge life in all its aspects. Moreover he thought of Goethe as an aristocrat and a courtier, a type of which he, the commoner, was distinctly impatient. More serious than these charges was Emerson's early belief that Goethe lacked any high ethical idealism and that he had no devotion to eternal, supernatural, or absolute truth. As time went on and Emerson's acquaintance with Goethe improved, these prejudices—for such they were in great part—dwindled and gave way to less captious judgments. He could never fully appreciate *Faust* because of what he averred was a philosophy of hedonism, although he saw in Mephistopheles the first new "organic figure" or mythos in literature since ages and praised Part II as the grandest enterprise since Milton's *Paradise Lost*. *Die Wahlverwandtschaften* he rejected without qualification as immoral and pernicious, while he accepted *Iphigenie*, *Torquato Tasso* and *Wilhelm Meister* with reservations.

In 1850 Emerson's *Essays on Representative Men* appeared. During his second visit to Europe, three years before, he had already expressed many of the opinions which are here voiced. His estimate of Goethe had now risen considerably and matured. He now found that Goethe was "the soul of his century", that "he saw out of every pore", that he had clothed modern life with poetry, and had said the best things about nature ever said. Moreover, he felt that God, the "old Eternal Genius who built the world", confided himself to Goethe more than to any other mortal, so that Goethe "lays a ray of light under every fact", informs his speculation with heart-cheering freedom, and says unforgettable things about every basic problem he touches.

Admirable as these pronouncements of Emerson are—and those who know Goethe best will be least disposed to gainsay them—one cannot help becoming conscious of their limitations and blind spots. Emerson had but little of significance to say about Goethe the lyricist, the poet, the stylist. He did not seem to sense the unforgettable reality of his flesh-and-blood character delineation. He missed completely the implications of *das Ewig-Weibliche* in Goethe's life. Nor did he grasp fully the socialmindedness of the sage of Weimar, his thorough belief in and practice of renunciation, or the extent to which he succeeded in reconciling the subjectivism of modern man with the objective demands of society.

Longfellow's reaction to Goethe differs somewhat from Emerson's, as one would expect a poet's impression to differ from a philosopher's and preacher's. Though several years Emerson's junior, Longfellow came into touch with German literature before Emerson and consequently at a much earlier age. Because of that fact, his repeated visits to Germany, and the necessity of preparing himself for a professorial position at Bowdoin College and later at Harvard in the field of modern foreign languages, including German, Longfellow's German was much superior to Emerson's. His first visit to Germany was made in 1826 at Ticknor's instigation. Unfortunately he did not pay a call on Goethe and saw only Dresden, where he stayed one month, and Göttingen, where he sojourned for less than three months. There can be no question but that he learned more Spanish during this three years' stay abroad than any other language. But when he assumed the professorship of modern languages at Bowdoin in 1829, he enriched the college library with a set of Goethe's works.

On his second stay in Germany, 1835–36, in preparation for the professorship at Harvard, Longfellow remained in Heidelberg for half a year. Now he learned the language well, spoke and wrote it with tolerable accuracy, and read voraciously. His judgments from this period and up to about 1840 are typical of his early impressions. Concerning *Werther* he writes that although men of the hero's type are repugnant to him, he thinks that the

work has been misunderstood both in England and the United States. *Die Wahlverwandtschaften*, however, is a "horrible book". Generally, too, Goethe seems to him to err in dealing too much with human nature in its degradation; he is a heathen, as opposed to the Christian Dante.

As Longfellow grew older, his utterances on Goethe became ever more favourable, although he, too, could never quite understand his code of morality and values. But he found him to be a man who longed for sympathy, a man of tolerant and kindly judgment. This increasing respect which the American poet cherished for Goethe finally penetrated his whole life and may be said to have left a clear imprint upon his work. If in his earlier period Longfellow indulged with predilection in the idyllic, romantic contemplation of life, only to turn later to sterner issues, Goethe deserves at least some credit for this transformation. To be sure, Longfellow's treatment of those issues has often been disparaged, even by ridicule, and has been called too homespun, shallow and platitudinous. Such a good critic as James T. Hatfield, however, is of a different opinion.[1] He sees in him, rightly we think, a poet "toward whom every honest American may cherish the highest pride and affection".

To what extent the poem *Evangeline* is under the spell of *Hermann und Dorothea*, at least in form and ultimate purpose, is a moot question. No similar doubt is justified in regard to the question of the relationship between *The Golden Legend* and *Faust*. Particularly during Longfellow's later years *Faust* loomed large on his horizon. That *The Golden Legend* tries to achieve a somewhat comparable purpose, without however fully succeeding, seems to be patent.

James Russell Lowell, man of letters, poet, scholar, and thinker, was in turn a dozen years younger than Longfellow. The beginnings of his occupation with German are to be traced to his early student days at Harvard, probably to 1835. He may still have begun his study of the language under Follen. At any rate, the interest in it which he developed at that time remained with him for the rest of his life. That he became intimately

[1] *Op. cit.*

conversant with both the tongue and its literature there can be no doubt, for his works contain very many references to things German. In 1851 he embarked upon his first voyage abroad, reaching Germany in 1852. Three years later, when he was appointed Professor of French and Spanish at Harvard, he made his second trip to Europe before taking up his professorial duties. His chief desire this time was to study more German—an unusual but most laudable goal for one preparing himself chiefly in the Romance languages and literatures. It is therefore not startling that later, when he occupied his chair at Harvard, he lectured frequently on German literature.

Goethe grew on Lowell just as he did on Emerson. In his essay on Carlyle in 1866 he called Goethe the last of the great poets. The same year, in the essay on Swinburne's tragedies, he spoke of Goethe's "capacious nature" which was "open to every influence of earth and sky" and in which "the spiritual fermentation of the eighteenth century settled and clarified". In another place he adjudged Goethe to be "classic in the only way it is now possible to be classic".

In his earlier critical pronouncements on Goethe Lowell was still occasionally censorious, but this tendency became less marked as he grew older. In calling Goethe calm as an immortal, he could not refrain from adding that Goethe possessed also some of the coldness of the immortals. But as a rule he found the German Olympian grand and rightfully pre-eminent. Later Lowell visited Germany a third time, and still later, in 1880, when on his way from Madrid to London, he undertook a pilgrimage expressly to Weimar. There was no question in Lowell's mind as to Goethe's secure place among the greatest poets. He was an "Aristotelian poet", wise, witty, and stately, "the man of widest acquirement in modern times, the genius of the nineteenth century".

George Wurfl[1] finds many conscious and unconscious "borrowings" from Goethe in Lowell's own works. These are more in the intangible realm of the spirit than of a physical nature, for although Lowell was undoubtedly a Goethe champion, one of

[1] *Op. cit.*

the ablest and most convincing that America has yet brought forth, he should not be called a mere camp-follower or slave of anyone. The influence of Goethe is perhaps most marked in his whole mode of critical attack and in an occasional Goethean hue with which his thought is tinged. That Lowell's influence upon his own generation, and on at least one succeeding generation, was profound, cannot be questioned.

With these three eminent Goethe apologists we have progressed well into the middle of the nineteenth century, and even beyond. But since all the significant critics of Goethe in the America of those days were not Emersons, or Longfellows, or Lowells, it will behoove us to turn also to these lesser lights for that proper chiaroscuro picture which life actually limns. On the whole, the fifth decade of the century showed a considerable increase in popular appreciation of Goethe. An American translation of *Iphigenie*, by a Judge Tucker, came out in *The Southern Literary Messenger* of Richmond, Virginia, in 1844. An American reprint of a British version of *Hermann und Dorothea* had appeared in the same place as early as 1805, while the William Whewell rendering of this idyllic epic was published in New York in 1848.[1] In 1848–49 *The Democratic Review* offered its readers English versions of *Alexis und Dora* and of the first three acts of *Iphigenie*. In 1847 a certain A. P. Peabody proclaimed in *The North American Review* that since the death of Richter and Goethe no rivals for their crowns had appeared. But in 1851 *The Southern Literary Messenger* opened its columns to a critic who deemed Goethe subversive enough to undermine "all that is honorable and holy amongst men". Another writer in *The North American Review* (1848), discussing Hedge's *Prose Writers in German*, charged Goethe with lacking power over our emotional nature; the best advice he could give the American reader of Goethe was not to judge the moral character of his writings by the moral character of the man. Thus the pendulum was kept swinging to

[1] A New York reprint of a British translation of *Dichtung und Wahrheit*, done from the French, is recorded for 1824, while Carlyle's *Wilhelm Meister* (both parts) appeared in several American editions from 1828 to 1852. At least two American renderings of *Egmont* (1837 and 1841) are known.

and fro.[1] This welter of conflicting opinions is strikingly characteristic of American Goethe criticism at the time. One of the most glaring illustrations is furnished by the reactions to Parke Godwin's edition of *Dichtung und Wahrheit* (1846). While Goethe's keen power of analysis in his autobiography was recognized and while he was praised for his objectivity, the strictures upon him were numerous and serious. He was berated for his dangerous philosophy, his lack of religion, and his crass egoism, which was found to be characteristic of such a petty German principality as the one in which he lived. He was scolded as a friend of despotism and the inventor of heathenish superstitions. He was called cold and aloof, and wanting in charm. On the other hand, other critics of the same publication found that Goethe inspired admiration and love and was faithful to the deeper spirit of his age. Indeed, one writer called him "the artist of his age" who "saw in the issues and tendencies of art a universality and grandeur of development" never seen so clearly before. Whoever, wrote *The Democratic Review* (1846–47), would learn the true meaning of art should read Goethe.

The period from 1854 to 1868 was one of markedly decreased interest in German literature. This is due partly to the Civil War, its antecedents and aftermath, and partly to the rising unpopularity of foreigners, especially Germans, because of a vastly growing wave of immigration from Central Europe. In 1856 the first American translation of *Faust* (Part I), by Timothy Brooks, appeared. This was an important event in the history of Goethe's reception in America. No doubt the earlier British translations, such as those of Hayward, Davies, Anster, A. Taylor, and Anna Swanwick, had become known to some extent in the United States, too. But while the rendering of Brooks is certainly inferior to the Swanwick translation, yet it was a sign of a growing American appreciation of Goethe that his masterpiece should now find a native translator. The work of Brooks was accorded lengthy reviews, which, however, usually opposed the philosophy of the drama.

[1] For this period cf. Martin H. Haertel: *German Literature in American Magazines, 1846 to 1880* (Bulletin of the University of Wisconsin, No. 263. Philological and Literary Series, vol. IV, No. 2, pp. 265–452, 1908).

The lyrics and ballads, too, were gradually becoming more accessible in translation. J. S. Dwight had translated *Select Minor Poems of Goethe* (Boston, 1839), and W. G. Thomas now published *Minor Poetry* (Philadelphia, 1859). The Bohn translation began appearing in England in 1847. Aytoun and Martin's *Poems and Ballads of Goethe* (1859), another British undertaking, was favourably reviewed in America. Among American translators of Goethean poems after 1840, Bancroft, William Cullen Bryant, who had lived in Germany, Channing, J. F. Clarke, Dwight, Margaret Fuller, Longfellow, Harriet Beecher Stowe, and, finally, Bayard Taylor deserve honourable mention.

A new and livelier interest in German, and particularly in Goethe, is noticeable from 1869 to 1880. The German immigrants, who had acquitted themselves creditably during the Civil War, were now accepted as full-fledged compatriots. Many private German schools were founded. Public school systems in communities with a numerous German population, such as Cincinnati, made German a required study, even in the lower forms, or went even farther by permitting the teaching of the rudimentary subjects to be conducted in German, instead of in English. This practice constitutes a curious chapter in the history of American education which has not yet been sufficiently investigated. That its results were not salutary is attested by the generations growing up under it, for the teaching was often inferior. Certainly a deep love and understanding for the German language and literature were not engendered. It seems, in fact, that the opposite effect was often achieved.

Of slightly more importance for bringing about a better understanding of things German in the United States were the visits of many Americans to Germany during those years. But here the fact that Germany was as yet hardly a nation in the truest sense of the word must explain the comparative paucity of results. A still more important factor in effecting an intellectual *rapprochement* were the numerous books on various aspects of German life and letters now appearing and which usually stressed the significance of Goethe. Among them were Hosmer's *Short History of German Literature* (1878) and Bayard Taylor's *Studies*

in German Literature (1879) and *Critical Essays and Literary Notes* (1880).

The publication of books like these marks the turning-point of a new age in the reception of German literature in America. The era of the purely expository general article was over. In theory at least readers were by now sufficiently well informed about the general trends of German letters, and of the individual writers, and did not need such articles any longer. Hence we find in their place articles of a more specialized and a more truly critical kind, and book-length treatments of specific topics and authors. Works exclusively on Goethe and the German classical period began coming out, too. Among them were George H. Calvert's biography (1872), the first American life of Goethe, written by a friend and warm admirer of the poet, and Boyesen's *Goethe and Schiller* (1879). These works, and some of the reviews in which they were noticed, revealed a more objective and broad-minded point of view than had been the rule previously. Indeed, one critic in *The Atlantic Monthly* (1872) admitted that earlier American criticism of Goethe had been under the spell of "English prudery".

Three books on Goethe which appeared between 1851 and 1871 were discussed more extensively than any others. They were Carlyle's translation of *Wilhelm Meister* (especially the Boston edition of 1851), Lewes's *Life of Goethe* (American edition, 1856—a condensation appeared in 1873), and Bayard Taylor's translation of *Faust*, Parts I and II. On these, as on Godwin's *Dichtung und Wahrheit*, there were sharply conflicting opinions. One critic of *Wilhelm Meister*, for instance, deemed the work a "prostitution of art", while another called it "essentially and vitally comprehensive" and worth reading over and over. After the reprinting of Carlyle's translation in 1865, to be sure, we find among the critics much deeper appreciation of Goethe's novel. One writer even recommended it to young readers.

George Henry Lewes's British book on Goethe, so well thought of even on the European continent that it was almost immediately translated into German, drew several significant American reviews, both favourable and unfavourable. There were those who

sternly challenged Lewes's defence of Goethe's morals; they attacked the poet for his "betrayal" of Charlotte and Kestner, or for his attitude during the Napoleonic wars, and thought that the tendency of his writings in general was negative. Others again preferred to leave Goethe's private life entirely aside and centred their attention upon his genius. After 1865, however, the questionings cease and give way to more profitable explorations into the nature and sources of the poet's philosophy, his relationship to Spinoza and others. By 1873 *The New Englander* went so far as to celebrate Goethe as "the poet of mankind".

An event of transcending importance, so far as Goethe's reputation in America is concerned, was the appearance of Bayard Taylor's *Faust* translation. Even to-day there are competent critics who still regard it as the best English *Faust* of all and, indeed, the pre-eminent English translation of any of Goethe's works. There is good reason for this judgment. The importance of Taylor's achievement as an influence in the better appreciation of Goethe can perhaps be most adequately appraised when it is pointed out that this translation did more to silence unintelligent *Faust* criticism in America than any other factor. The Brooks rendering of 1856 had been received with mixed feelings, and even the fair and intelligent review of it by Mrs. C. B. Corson in *The New Englander* (1863) was marred by a meddlesome editor's note warning against the fallacy of Faust's philosophy. Taylor's verson, however, was well received almost universally, the best critique probably being Franklin Carter's in *The New Englander* (1879). A generation later Lewis Morrison's acting version of *Faust* swept the country.

And so Goethe was gradually coming into his own in America. Slowly but perceptibly it dawned upon Americans that he had a special message for them, that he was preaching a doctrine of higher liberty for all mankind—a liberty which they prized so dearly. The statement of Edward Dowden in *The Academy* of 1883, "it is evident that in this country we are about to advance to a new stage of Goethe scholarship—the exact study of the man and his total work", was applicable to the United States as well as to England. Indeed, may it not be applied with equal truth to

Germany itself, where the founding of *Goethe-Philologie* by Wilhelm Scherer in the seventies and the opening of the *Goethe-Archiv* somewhat later were pivotal events?

Numerous translations of Goethe's shorter poems were made after 1860. But the results were uneven in quality. John Weiss produced a good version of the *West-östlicher Divan* in 1877, and Paul Carus made acceptable translations of the *Xenien* (1896). But the renderings of the whole body of lyrics by Paul Dyrsen (1878) are so thoroughly bad as to stand out as horrible examples. One stanza of *Heidenröslein* will suffice to illustrate the depths to which translation can sink:

> Saw a boy a rosie bright,
> In the heath a rosie.
> Clad she was with morning light,
> He approached and at her sight
> Boy was warm and cozy.

In her study of *Goethe's Lyric Poems in English Translation after 1860* Stella Hinz gives interesting comparative statistics of the number of English translations of Goethean lyrics by periods. Both British and American renderings are included. According to these statistics, sixty-four Goethean lyrics were essayed in the forties, sixty-nine in the seventies, and 148 in the eighties. Since 1910 there has been a steady drop. Among the few later American translators who have made renderings of some distinction are Lilian Bayard Taylor Kiliani and Margarete Münsterberg.

Since the eighties various editions of Goethe's collected works in English have appeared in the United States. Among them are the following: Hedge-Noa (Boston, 1882), the so-called Göttingen edition (Philadelphia and Chicago, 1882) Boyesen (Philadelphia, 1885), Houghton-Mifflin (Boston, 1885), and the so-called Weimar edition (Boston, 1902). If these eclectic compilations prove nothing else, they show at least that the publication of Goethe's works in English must have been commercially profitable in the United States during that period.

Ever since the eighties and nineties, when the study of German in American secondary schools, colleges, and universities became

very popular, and especially since the nineties, when post-graduate university instruction on the Continental model was developed on a broad scale, Goethe has offered material for courses which have become a tradition in almost every American institution of higher learning. Scholars like Max Winkler in Michigan, A. R. Hohlfeld in Wisconsin, J. T. Hatfield at Northwestern University, Calvin Thomas and W. A. Hervey at Columbia University, John A. Walz at Harvard, and Carl Schreiber at Yale (where the valuable Speck Goethe Collection is housed) have imparted to several generations of American students knowledge of, and enthusiasm for, Goethe. The pages of the *Publications of the Modern Language Association of America* (since 1884) and of a dozen other specialized learned periodicals are rich in contributions to a better understanding of Goethe, while the number of American school editions of individual works has reached fantastic proportions. A complete American Goethe bibliography would now record close on five thousand items.

Comprehensive American books on Goethe, not only original works but also translations or adaptations from other languages, have been numerous. Many others deal with special aspects of his thought and achievement, from anthroposophy to natural science. Societies of various kinds, particularly in larger centres like New York and Chicago, are devoted to study and discussion of his writings. Monuments to him adorn the parks and public squares of numerous cities, and streets are named after him.

If the interest of translators is a good criterion, then Goethe's masterpiece, *Faust*, has taken particularly firm root in America during the past generation. Beginning with the Canadian rendering of Van der Smissen (1926), we count at least five recent translations, either of both parts of the drama or of Part I alone, that seem significant and likely to live. The most satisfactory of them is perhaps that of George Madison Priest (both parts, 1932). Any of them compares favourably with the best efforts of the nineteenth century, and the average quality of their attainment is far superior to that of their predecessors.

It is characteristic of American occupation with Goethe during

the past two generations that much of it is the work of Goethe specialists and scholars who have devoted their lives to the study of German literature. But they have been by no means alone in offering interpretations and appreciations. Indeed, some of the most trenchant and significant American Goethe criticism of the past forty years has not come from Goethe scholars. As early as 1910 the philosopher George Santayana, in *Three Philosophical Poets*, raised serious but intelligent charges against Goethe. He claimed that the keynote of his works, and of *Faust* in particular, was romantic restlessness and that Faust himself, as Goethe presents him, is consumed only by feverish attempts to escape from *ennui*.

The eminent critic Irving Babbitt, whose interests went far beyond his special field of French literature, did not agree with Santayana on this point. In *Rousseau and Romanticism* (1919) he expressed the belief that Goethe glimpsed the truth lying at the base of humanism and religion and, recognizing the disease of romanticism, preached the need of working within boundaries. But Goethe had not always been a potential "humanist", according to Babbitt; in his earlier days he indulged in both "morbid emotionalism" and "emotional sophistry". In *Faust*, too, Babbitt detected a sophistical element, as where "the devil is defined as the spirit that always says no" (as though Mephistopheles were "the devil"!); or where Faust breaks down all precise discrimination in favour of mere emotional intoxication.

A basic objection of Babbitt and the Neo-Humanists in general to Goethe seems to be that in the fifth act of *Faust*, Part II, he set up work "according to natural law as a substitute for work according to the human law". This, if we follow Babbitt, is an egregious piece of sham wisdom, because work according to human law (ethical efficiency) leads to increasing serenity, while Faust never finds complete calmness, even as a "hydraulic engineer". Instead of laws for men he dreams of laws for things, and these, says Babbitt, quoting Emerson, run wild and dethrone man.

In the light of such argument, it is interesting to consider recent *Faust* criticism in Germany itself. There, too, the trend is away

from the traditional explanation of Faust's end as embodying salvation by ethical purification, dictated by the perfectionist attitude. Both Wilhelm Böhm (*Faust der Nichtfaustische*, 1933) and, more recently, Reinhold Schneider (*Fausts Rettung*, 1946. Cf. also the American, Ernst Jockers, in *Publications of the Modern Language Association of America*, June–September, 1947) picture Faust ending his earthly career in grandiose self-deception and wilful self-destruction—a Titan who after a life of restless activity dies in radical hybris and self-annihilation. Is this not a surprising approximation to the view hinted at by Santayana, and more fully expounded by Babbitt, over a generation before?

It has often been thought that the American Humanists, especially Babbitt, Paul Elmer More, and Norman Foerster, are uncompromisingly anti-Goethe because they detected in Goethe a "naturalist". But this is not quite true. Babbitt found Goethe both poet and wise at times, often wiser than Rousseau, with an ethical realism worthy of Dr. Johnson, and Socratic in his attitude toward tradition. He placed him at least within hailing distance of Aristotle (compare James Russell Lowell's dictum that Goethe was an "Aristotelian poet"!) as a scientist who was also a humanist. He praised Goethe for his belief in self-mastery and reliance upon imagination, and admitted that at his best Goethe accepted the limitations imposed by moral, or human, law. This humanistic Goethe, however, had few followers in Germany in Babbitt's day. As we have just seen, the catastrophic happenings in that country during the present generation may be effecting a transformation along the very lines of Babbitt's thinking. And it may yet turn out that Babbitt, whom no recognized German Goethe scholar would have accepted in 1919, anticipated German criticism, on its own favourite ground, by twenty years. As for More and Foerster, both pay passing compliments to Goethe in the volume *Humanism and America* (1930).

We close our consideration of Goethe's reputation in America with a brief reference to the American observances in 1932 of the one-hundredth anniversary of the poet's death. Both sides were heard, his detractors as well as his admirers. But in this case the latter clearly won the day. Perhaps the views expressed on the

numerous occasions when homage was paid to Goethe may best be summarized by a passage from the address which Camillo von Klenze, who knew both his native Germany and his adopted America as few men know them, delivered at the University of Wisconsin. "May the celebrations", said Professor von Klenze, "which are being held in honour of Goethe in various parts of this country contribute to a realization of how much inspiration and fortitude the new America which is rising under our eyes may derive from a sage who, without rejecting the past, insisted on enjoying the present . . . and who could maintain with justice that to enter into the tenor of his work meant achieving spiritual liberation".

GOETHE AND THE BOOK COLLECTOR

by Percy H. Muir

WHAT are the constituents in an author—apart from literary eminence—that make him an ideal subject for the collector? It depends upon the point of view. The modest collector prefers an author whose work has not been too prolific; is not too difficult to secure; and the history of whose publications has not been too wildly fraught with the kind of complication that is alternately the despair and the boast of the bibliographer. Some also prefer an author whose bibliographical path is clearly delineated. For such collectors as these Goethe would prove a most tiresome and unattractive author. There are, however, other standards to be considered, and according to these Goethe is almost the ideal subject for a collector's attention. He was exceedingly prolific; his books were published under all kinds of peculiar circumstances; many of them were subjected to a variety of treatment, owing either to their failure to sell quickly, or to the fastidiousness or carelessness of the author, the printer, or the publisher; he was exceedingly fond of producing small editions of separate pieces for distribution among his friends; and at least one of his major pieces is still a mystery to bibliographers. Literary eminence he has in plenty, being indisputably the greatest of all German writers.

There is no such thing as a complete Goethe collection. The most complete is the one made by Anton Kippenberg, and happily still in existence (2).[1] His principal forerunner, and the first serious Goethe collector, was Salomon Hirzel (1804–78), who left his collection to the Library of the University of Leipzig; a memorial catalogue of it was published by L. Hirzel in 1884 (3). Friedrich Meyer, a Leipzig bookseller, was an avid Goethe enthusiast. He published a catalogue of his possessions (4), offering them for sale as a whole, but the important items in the collection were eventually sold at public auction (5). Other important private collections include those of Otto Deneke (6), Kurt Wolff (7), and Carl Schüddekopf (8). There are, of course, also collections in several German public libraries, the contents of which may be adequately gleaned from a *Gesamtkatalog* published in 1932 (9).

The Goethe-collector's problems begin mildly enough with his first book, which is a collection of songs set to music by Goethe's young friend B. Th. Breitkopf and published by Breitkopf and Härtel in 1770. This was entitled *Neue Lieder in Musik gesetzt.* . . . and the poet's name does not appear. The collector's only problem here is to find the book, for it is very rare. Next comes the "Disputations" on the (56) *Positiones juris,* for which he received his law doctorate, printed by the University Press at Strassburg in 1771. There is, presumably, little need to emphasize here how difficult to find this will be.

His real literary output, however, begins with the year 1773 and the publication of *Götz von Berlichingen.* It is now well known that Goethe and Merck expected to make a small fortune by publishing the book at their own expense: Merck's liability was the printing and Goethe's the paper. Most authorities used to follow Goedeke in the assumption that the printer was G. H. Eylau of Darmstadt; but it is now established beyond doubt that it was Wittich. What is more important for our purpose is that the amateurish method of publication, coupled with the immediate success of the book, and the lack of Privilege—the sole method, and not a very effective one, of securing any semblance

[1] These figures throughout refer to the annotated bibliography at the end of this chapter.

of copyright at the time—attracted the pirates; and two unauthorized editions dated 1773 were more widely distributed than the original, which was a complete failure. None of these three editions has any imprint, but the collector is protected by the fact that the first edition has 206 pages, whereas one piracy has 157 and the other 160 pages.

Merck seems to have made himself responsible also for two trifles that have now become great rarities. Both appeared in 1773—*Von deutscher Baukunst, D. M. Ervini a Steinbach* and *Brief des Pastors zu xxx an den neuen Pastor zu xxx*—both no imprint, but the latter distributed by Eichenberg in Frankfurt. It is, perhaps, worth noting that the preservation, even the discovery, of such not altogether unimportant trifles of an author's early years is frequently due to the zeal of bibliophiles. Neither Meyer nor Kippenberg possessed the former—indeed only two copies are recorded in public sales—but after thirty years' search, Meyer at last found a copy of the latter.

Werther, 1774, introduces a host of new problems for the collector to solve. Let us begin with the authorized editions. There are two issues of the first edition, both published by the Weygandsche Buchhandlung, 1774, each with 224 pages. The earliest has a list of errata on page 224, which is not found in the later issue. Then follows the second edition, dated 1775. Among the host of piracies there appears to be none dated earlier than 1775. Of the first issue there are two states. In the more common one the reading on page 101 is "das härne Gewand"; in the other "das härine Gewand". No priority has been established.

The success of *Werther* was immediate and world-wide—it is said that in China porcelain figures of Lotte and Werther were produced, though probably for the European market—but its local fame was due in considerable measure to its being based partly on the suicide of Karl Wilhelm Jerusalem in Wetzlar and partly on Goethe's own abortive affection for Charlotte Buff. Add to this the fact that its sentimentality and despair chimed exactly with the spirit of the times and one can appreciate why, in Lewes's words, "there was never a fiction which so startled and enraptured the world".

The list of Werther literature in Goedeke includes nearly three hundred *Wertheriaden*, mostly imitations of the original, apart from the very numerous piracies of the original text. Two of these *Wertheriaden* irked Goethe sufficiently to move him to action. The earlier of these was Nicolai's *Freuden des jungen Werthers*, 1755. Goethe wrote a savage and coarsely worded poem in reply entitled *Herr Nicolai auf Werthers Grabe*. It has been repeatedly stated that single-sheet printings of this poem were distributed in 1775 and 1777, but no example of that period is now known. In its earliest known form, printed in *Fraktur*, it belongs to the year 1820. There is a second printing, of 1837, in Roman type, in which the words "wohler athmend" are printed as "wohl erathmet". Both are elusive pieces for the collector.

The second *Einblattdruck* concerns the anonymous publication, also in 1775, of H. L. Wagner's *Prometheus, Deukalion*. This was so widely and so confidently attributed to Goethe that he felt called upon to circulate a printed notice to newspapers denying authorship of it.

Werther literature is endless; we must confine ourselves to one more curiosity. Several young persons were found dead at this time with *Werther* open beside them; Maria Franziska, Freifräulein von Ickstatt, however, threw herself from one of the tall towers of the Frauenkirche at Munich in 1785 under circumstances so reminiscent of Werther's hopeless passion that Nesselrode found it a ready-made *Wertheriade* and produced *Die Leiden der jungen Fanni*. Baumgartner followed suit and Fanny's family took legal action in which the similarity between Werther and Jerusalem was emphasized.

The year 1775 was an eventful one for the young author, for in November he accepted the invitation of the Grand Duke Karl August and visited Weimar for the first time. In June, 1776, he was given a seat on the Privy Council, and in 1782 became entitled to describe himself on visiting cards as *Grossherzogl. Sachsen Weimarischer wirklicher Geheimerath und Staatsminister von Goethe.*

As part of his official duties he busied himself with the reopening of the mines at Ilmenau. His visits there produced not only the poem of that name and the famous lines he wrote in pencil on the

wall of a hut there, beginning "Über allen Gipfeln ist Ruh"; but also a series of some eight or nine official reports on the mines, not to mention his oration on the occasion of their reopening on February 24th, 1784. All of these were printed and evade the assiduous collector by their varying degrees of rarity.

Before leaving the privately printed material its extensive range may be indicated. Thus for friends and notabilities Goethe would have broadsides of poems printed in very limited numbers; for special occasions he would have his plays produced and programmes distributed among the very limited audience. He was an autograph-collector and had printed a list of the specimens he possessed, which he distributed in the hope that friends might present him with others. This collection was no plaything; he made it as a student of graphology, "because handwriting bears a direct relationship to the character of the writer and his disposition at the time of writing". Offprints of articles and poems from periodicals, a parody on Jacobi's *Woldemar*, conjectures on Greek paintings, conditions for borrowers at the Ducal Library and a complaint that books borrowed had not been returned, conditions for art scholarships, the prospectus of a mineralogical society and a booklet to accompany a box of mineral specimens, are only some of the oddities that belong to a Goethe collection.

Two similar examples of Goethe's extravagances of this sort may be described in more detail. In 1772 two German translations of Goldsmith's *Deserted Village* appeared. One was by Goethe's friend Gotter—which has disappeared—the other was by Schlosser, Goethe's brother-in-law. Goethe himself seems to have attempted a translation, but this was not published. What was published was a curious edition in English, with the imprint *Darmstadt, Printed for a Friend of the Vicar.* There is no doubt that the producer of this small volume was Merck, Goethe's friend, and very little doubt indeed that the "Friend" in the imprint was Goethe himself. Only five copies of it are known to have survived, and, in 1924, Paul Hirsch, himself an enthusiastic Goethe collector, reprinted it in facsimile from his own copy of the original edition (11).

The other piece also has an English origin. In 1822 Goethe

received at the hands of Rehbein, who had it from Benecke in Göttingen, a single sheet in Byron's handwriting of his proposed dedication to Goethe of his poem *Sardanapalus*. Goethe was so pleased with this tribute that he had the sheet lithographed in facsimile and was accustomed to enclose a copy of it in letters to particular friends. In point of fact the dedication was omitted from the first edition of Byron's poem of 1821, but it appeared in the second edition of 1823. To complete the story it may be added that Goethe had to return the manuscript to Benecke, but received it again after Byron's death in 1826 and retained it to the end.

On the bibliographical problems of the *Faust* fragment, 1790, I have enlarged elsewhere.[1] I can say no more here than that it formed part of the seventh volume of the first authorized collected edition of Goethe's Works, in eight volumes, published by Göschen between 1787 and 1790. All the new material in these volumes was also printed separately; and every Goethe collector is anxious to secure the "right" editions of the separate printings of *Clavigo*, *Iphigenie*, and *Egmont*, etc., as well as *Faust*.[2] Both in its separate form and as part of the volume some of the sheets of *Faust* provide evidence of two printings. The key-point of the variant is that in it the last four lines on page 144 are repeated as the first four lines on page 145. I have given elaborate reasons for supposing that this variant is not later than the normal printing, my theory being that the printing was divided, simultaneously, between two shops in one of which the error occurred by oversight. I have also given reasons for believing that special-paper copies were issued at the time.

It may be suitable to remark here that, although Göschen's collected edition was the first to be authorized, it had been anticipated by three or four different publishers none of whom thought it necessary to consult Goethe or to pay him a fee. All are rare, especially the first, published in Biel by Heilmann in 1775–76 and consisting of only three volumes.

[1] *Times Literary Supplement*, October 14th and 21st, 1939.

[2] A distinguishing point of the "right" editions is that "Ächte Ausgabe" on the title-page should be so spelled. The spelling "Aechte" is the sign of a fraudulent edition.

Pirated editions are usually thought of as something cheap and nasty; but this was by no means true of many of the Goethe piracies. To us it appears dishonest that publishers should have stolen the work of authors in this unconscionable fashion; and when we hear of pirates lavishing fees on designers and engravers to make their doubtful wares attractive to the public, we feel that a kind of inverted insult is added to the injury. But it should be remembered that the copyright position was far from clear; and it is questionable whether, under the existing circumstances, authors could be said to own any considerable right in their own work. On the other hand publishers were not always quite easy in their minds about making so free with rights which, to whomsoever they might belong, the pirates themselves could have no shadow of claim.

Such a twinge of conscience was responsible for an amusing incident with one of the most successful Goethe pirates—Christian Friedrich Himburg, of Berlin, who, in 1775–79 produced, in three volumes, a pirated collected edition of exceeding beauty.[1] The story is best told in Goethe's own words (12):

"Here I will recall an occurrence, although it happened later. As my works came increasingly into demand, and even a collection of them seemed to be called for, a project which I was reluctant to undertake myself, Himburg took the opportunity of my procrastination, and I received, unexpectedly, some copies of a collected edition of my works. With the greatest impudence this meddlesome publisher had the guile to attempt a reconciliation with me for this public service by offering to send me, in exchange for it, if I wished, some Berlin porcelain. In these circumstances I could not avoid the recollection that Berlin Jews,[2] on the occasion of a marriage, were accustomed to make wedding presents of parcels of porcelain, on which the royal factory made a certain rebate. The contempt due to this shameless pirate for this enabled me to withstand the vexation which this robbery was bound to cause me. I did not reply to him; and as this inevitably left him

[1] The Chodowiecki engravings to it are among his *chefs-d'œuvre* and the frontispiece to the first volume, with a medallion portrait of Lotte and a scene from *Werther*, is thought by some good judges to be the finest of all his designs.

[2] Himburg was not a Jew: the remark is deliberately offensive.

in the possession of my property, I revenged myself in tranquillity with the following verses. . . ."

The poem, which is too long to quote in full, ends with the couplet:

Weg das Porzellan, das Zuckerbrot!
Für die Himburgs bin ich tot.

Despite the long-cherished resentment—*Dichtung und Wahrheit* is forty years after the piracy—despite the offence caused by the offer of the porcelain gift, Goethe was not above commending Himburg's edition as a pattern for Göschen in preparing the first authorised collected edition.

It was, perhaps, due partly to his own failure with *Götz* and to his early unfortunate experience with pirates that Goethe retained a consistently low opinion of publishers. "Booksellers are all devilish, a special hell should be devised for them", he wrote during his negotiations with Cotta; and with the wretched Göschen, who was the first to undertake an authorized collected edition of his works, which involved him in considerable financial loss, Goethe seems never to have exchanged a single direct communication, nor even to have consented to overlook proofs.

Admittedly the position of authors in Germany was highly unsatisfactory. It has already been said that a privilege from a reigning prince was the sole means of securing any kind of copyright, but even this was extremely limited in scope. For Germany was a mass of small states and, before the foundation of the *Zollverein*, the efficacy of a privilege was limited to the area of the principality in which it was granted. The remarkable thing is not that piracy was rife, but, in view of its extent and the inevitability of its occurrence, that any publisher could be found willing to risk good money on the production of new work. This makes nonsense, for example, of Lewes's astonishment and indignation at the miserable sums offered to Goethe and Schiller for their copyrights. It also makes one impatient with Goethe's indiscriminate condemnations of booksellers, for both Göschen and Cotta were fully prepared to risk money on him for which they could expect little enough return for many years. It is very right and proper for publishers to appreciate in such practical fashion the

honour they acquire in publishing a great man's work; but Goethe's attitude to them, *de haut en bas*, becomes him badly.

Göschen has been called "the German Bodoni", because of his considerable preoccupation with type-design; and when he undertook his collected edition of Goethe a part of the undertaking included the provision of an entirely new Gothic type for it. He had been in business for only one year and a half, having started with a capital of three thousand thalers advanced by Schiller's friend Körner. Goethe showed very little consideration for his difficulties. He was reasonably prompt in revising the already published material which the earlier volumes contained; but when it came to supplying the new material for later volumes his customary dilatoriness was well to the fore. Thus the first three volumes were ready as promised, for exhibition at the Leipzig fair at Easter, 1787, although Göschen's fastidiousness and dissatisfaction with Chodowiecki's plates caused him to hold over the actual publication and delivery to subscribers for several months. The fourth and fifth volumes were fairly well on time but Goethe then switched over to volume eight, which reached the publisher fragmentarily, and then back to volume six. *Faust* was to be in the seventh volume, and it is typical both of Goethe's reluctance to tackle the completion of any major work and of his generally shabby treatment of Göschen, that all that this publisher actually received of this work was the "Fragment" that he published in 1790.

Nevertheless it seems to have been a shock to Goethe when Göschen declined the *Metamorphose der Pflanzen*, and a new publisher had to be found for it. This was Ettinger in Gotha, who was also the agent for *Das Römische Carneval*, so handsomely and elaborately produced by Unger, a first-class printer who also became Goethe's publisher for a time—notably of the *Neue Schriften*, seven volumes, 1792–1800.

Let us for a moment break away from collected editions, however, to consider another pair of oddities that plague the Goethe-collector. These are the two volumes of the *Beiträge zur Optik*, 1791 and 1792, published by *Bertuchs Industrie Comptoir* in Weimar. Whether this was the same Bertuch who was

deprived of his *Gartenhaus* to satisfy a whim of Goethe's I am unable to say.

The volumes were reports on progress in Goethe's investigations into the theory of colour, upon which subject he ventured to differ from Newton. To simplify the reader's task in following his experiments Goethe provided with the first volume a set of tables in the form of a pack of cards—an idea that seems to have suggested itself to him as a result of the propinquity to Weimar of a playing-card manufacturer. To the second volume belong a large card, measuring 38 x 54 cm., on which strips of paper of various colours were pasted, and a copper engraving. The reader was expected to view these strips through a prism and thus to reproduce for himself the effects detailed in the text.

The pack of cards was small and could easily be sent with the book to which it belonged, but the card had to be rolled or folded to approximate it to the size of the book. Prisms were not to be had; and the small number of people who bought the volume either did not bother to take the card or soon lost it. Indeed booksellers themselves declined to stock it. Moreover the card bears no indication of its being an appurtenance to any book. The reader may not be surprised to learn that until 1928 no copy of the card was known to have survived. In that year a copy was discovered in the Stuttgart *Landesbibliothek*, and since then one more has come to light.

Unger's publication of the *Neue Schriften* cannot be lightly passed over, for it included *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre*, four volumes, 1795–96,[1] both separately and as volumes three to six of the collected edition. This, as Sondheim (13) says, is "a milestone in the development of the German novel, and no less a milestone in the history of German typography". For in it was used for the first time Unger's newly designed *Fraktur* face. This important type-face Sondheim has traced through the first Schlegel translation of Shakespeare down to modern times. When the Unger firm ceased to exist the type was bought by Trowitsch in Berlin and then passed through a number of hands until in 1901

[1] Some or all of the eight folding sheets of music are frequently missing from this work.

Enschedé, in Haarlem, revived it and it was used for the great Propyläen Edition of Goethe, begun in 1909.

After acceding to the request of Vieweg for a publication in almanack form—*Hermann und Dorothea* 1798, issued in various bindings including watered-silk, and with different sets of plates—Goethe was introduced to his final publisher, Cotta, by Schiller. We may gather very plainly what Goethe's behaviour to publishers was like from the letter that Schiller wrote to Cotta in 1802 when introducing to him the notion of publishing the work of the great man who was his friend and fellow-countryman.

" It is, to be quite plain", he wrote, "not good business to treat with Goethe, because he is fully aware of his own importance and values himself very highly. Of the risks of publishing, on which he has altogether only the vaguest notion, he takes no account. So far no bookseller has continued connections with him, he was not satisfied with any of them, and some may not have been satisfied with him. Liberality towards his publishers is not his affair". By no means an attractive prospect, one may think; but Cotta tackled it. He was a business man and a man of affairs before everything else, and he took Goethe on as a long-term prospect. He was a publisher in a large way of business, with his own printing and engraving works, and he owned the *Allegemeine Zeitung*. He was also an originator of the steamboat service on Lake Constance and a considerable political figure, important enough to sit on the original commission which founded the *Zollverein*.

He was not much concerned with the high standards of production observed by such as Göschen and Unger; but that he could produce a fine book if put to it we have the *West-östlicher Divan* to prove. This, however, was due less to his efforts than to the printer—Frommann-Wesselhöft of Jena. Goethe carefully supervised this production himself and had a few special copies struck off on fine paper for his own use, which are among the rarest and costliest of a bibliophile's desiderata.

Cotta was also responsible for the completion of the printing of *Faust*. He published the First Part in 1808, the Second Part in 1833, and the complete work in 1834. One could hardly

expect that the publication of such an important work would escape the attention of the pirates and, indeed, there is a fairly complicated story to tell. The *Fragment* of 1790 has already been dealt with, but between the publication of the First Part, proper, and the Second Part Cotta had begun, in 1827, the publication of the definitive collected edition, known then and now as the *Ausgabe letzter Hand*. In the second volume of this, in 1827, was included *Helena . . . Zwischenspiel zu Faust*, which attracted fairly wide critical attention both inside and outside Germany. This was seized upon by two booksellers in Paris, both of whom produced editions of it together with the First Part in 1832. Both were in German and one has the false imprint—Heidelberg.

The *Ausgabe letzter Hand*[1] was the third collected edition published by Cotta. At the time of Goethe's death forty volumes of it had been published. Cotta immediately began to add the posthumous works, twenty volumes of them, the first containing the Second Part of *Faust*. Publication was completed in 1842. Cotta retained the monopoly of publishing Goethe's works, with such protection as a Privilege could provide, until 1867.

The year 1867 is a landmark in German publishing and bookselling history, for in that year the now famous *Reclam Universal-Bibliothek* was begun. Reclam must have prepared his plans very carefully because the first volume of the series, containing the First Part of *Faust*, appeared only six days after Cotta's privilege expired, and the Second Part followed almost immediately. The publisher showed great courage and enterprise in launching this series costing a few pence a volume, and especially in selecting Goethe's masterpiece to begin with, for there was little evidence of a general demand for it. The success of the series is now well-known—before the war they could be bought in slot-machines on German railway-stations—and if the First Part of *Faust* is the most widely read of any native production in Germany Reclam can claim a major share in this result. We may take it that the initial response was not encouraging, for no other work by Goethe

[1] There are four editions, two in 8vo., one of which is on large paper, and two in 12mo., with or without 40 title-vignettes.

appeared in this series until volume fifty, which was *Hermann und Dorothea.*

Two English productions much prized by Goethe-collectors are the editions printed by Cobden Sanderson at the Doves Press. In 1906 he produced the First Part of *Faust* and in 1910 the Second Part; in 1911 *Die Leiden des jungen Werther*; in 1912 came *Iphigenie auf Tauris* and in 1913 *Torquato Tasso;* finally in 1916, in the middle of the first world war, came the *Auserlesene Lieder.* All were printed on vellum as well as on paper.

In conclusion, the first aim of the Goethe-collector is to secure first editions of all the more important published works; secondly to add as much of the privately issued material as his purse or his persistence can compass; and finally he cannot afford to neglect the Himburg and the Göschen collected editions and Cotta's *Ausgabe letzter Hand* which are the absolute minimum requirements in this field.

ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

I am greatly indebted for the loan of bibliographical material and for general counsel to my friend Paul Hirsch. Among the works I have consulted are:

1. Goedeke and Goetze: *Grundriss zur Geschichte der Deutschen Dichtung.* Band IV. Abt. 2 and 3. Dritte Auflage, Dresden, 1910–12.

2. *Katalog der Sammlung Kippenberg.* Bände I–III. Zweite Ausgabe, Leipzig, 1928. These volumes of the catalogue give details of an extensive collection of Goethe material—manuscripts, graphic material, first editions and ana; divided according to subject. Professor Dr. Anton Kippenberg is probably most widely known as the owner of the Insel-Verlag. Before the war his Goethe collection was housed at Leipzig; but it was taken to his present home at Marburg, where he still rejoices in its possession. The collection comprises more than eight thousand items and includes, besides first editions of most of the separate works and the collected editions, a remarkable selection of manuscripts, portraits and other ana. The catalogue itself is an elegantly produced and authoritative work of reference.

3. L. Hirzel (Editor): *Salomon Hirzels Verzeichnis einer Goethe-Bibliothek mit Nachträgen und Fortsetzung.* Leipzig, 1884.
   Lists of the items in this collection were published during the owner's lifetime, notably in 1874, but are entirely superseded by the above. Bibliographical pioneers cannot hope to do more than blaze a trail through an unexplored jungle. The removal of obstacles and the eventual provision of the highway must be left to later explorers. Hirzel was such a pioneer and his guidance spared later bibliographers many pitfalls; but this catalogue is now a pious testament for the Goethe-collector, rather than a guide to his bibliography.

4. *Verzeichnis einer Goethe-Bibliothek* von Friedrich Meyer. Leipzig, 1908.
   This almost terrifyingly complete collection was made by a Leipzig bookseller and offered for sale as a whole. The more important items were sold by auction in 1910 (See (5)). Meyer was perhaps the first German bibliophile to extend to German collecting the preference for original condition which is such a common feature of English–American and French bibliography. Most of his first editions were in this state and in prime condition. His notes, though brief, give adequate indication of issue points where they exist (7,683 items divided chronologically by year; 3,750 items of less important ana are not listed). An extensive index to names and subjects is included. Indispensable to the Goethe-collector.

5. *Katalog der Goethe-Bibliothek Friedrich Meyer* . . . C. G. Boerner, Leipzig, 1910. Auctioned May 27th and 28th.
This catalogue contains extensive bibliographical notes, some of which need checking with later discoveries.

6. *Katalog der Bibliothek Dr. Otto Deneke*. . . . Joseph Baer & Co., Frankfurt, 1909. Auctioned 19th to 21st October.

7. *Sammlung Kurt Wolf. Erstausgaben Sturm und Drang*. . . . Joseph Baer & Co., Frankfurt, 1912. Auctioned 11th to 14th November.
Two interesting features of this important and exceedingly well-catalogued sale are (1) the appearance of the very rare *Von Deutscher Baukunst*, 1773, which sold for Mk. 1750, and, to his lasting regret, was not secured by Dr. Kippenberg; and (2) the fact that the *Epigramme*, Venedig 1790, reached almost as high a price, Mk. 1110.

8. *Bücher-Sammlung des † Herrn Professor Dr. Carl Schüddekopf*. . . . Martin Breslauer, Berlin, 1918. Auctioned 23rd to 28th September, 1918.
The prices show the usual inflationary influence of war conditions.

9. *Gesamtkatalog der preussischen Bibliotheken mit Nachweis des identischen Besitzes der bayerischen Staatsbibliothek in München und der National-bibliothek in Wien*. Goethe. Herausg. v.d. Preuss. Staatsbibliothek, Berlin, 1932.
The Goethe possessions of eighteen public libraries are listed.

10. H. Bräuning-Oktavio: *Der Erstdruck von Goethes Götz von Berlichingen* . . . Darmstadt, 1923.

11. *The Deserted Village*, a Poem by Dr. Goldsmith. The Author of the Vicar of Wakefield. [Double Rule] Darmstadt, Printed for a Friend of the Vicar.
A facsimile (1924) of the first edition, of which three hundred copies were printed, with a reprint of Schlosser's translation and a valuable bibliographical essay by Dr. Karl Viëtor.

12. *Dichtung und Wahrheit*. 4ter Teil. Jubiläums Ausgabe, XXV, 10–11.

13. M. Sondheim: *Die Gestalt der Schriften Goethes im Wandel der Zeit. Rede zu Goethes hundertstem Todestag in der Frankfurter Bibliophilen-Gesellschaft*. Frankfurt, 1932.
Full of useful and interesting information on the conditions under which some of the important works were first published.

14. *Antiquariats-Katalog. Nr.* 100. Friedrich Meyers Buchdlg, Leipzig, 1911.
Ninety-eight Werther items, with facsimiles of title-pages, notes, etc., compiled for sale by this great Goethe bibliophile-bibliopole.

15. *Katalog* 15. *Faust und Werther*. C. G. Boerner, Leipzig, 1909.
One-hundred-and-forty-four Faust items and fifty-five Werther items.

16. Schulte-Strathaus: *Die echten Ausgaben von Goethes Faust.* München, 1932.
A full-length discussion of the circumstances associated with Göschen's original publication of *Faust, ein Fragment*, 1790. I have given my reasons for differing from his conclusions in *The Times Literary Supplement*, October 14th and 21st, 1939.

17/18. U. Deneke: *Goethes Schriften, bei Göschen*, 1787–1790. *Die Einzeldrucke Goethe'scher Werke bei Göschen*, 1787/1790. 4ter u. 5ter Göttinger Beiträge zur Goethebibliographie. August 28th and December 31st, 1909.
Fascinating, but also saddening accounts of the negotiations between Göschen and Goethe for the publication of the first authorized collected edition. Schulte-Strathaus's conclusions are largely based on them. The first of them reprints the agreement for publishing, and various announcements of the edition issued by Göschen and Goethe. Also includes a bibliography of each of the eight volumes, with notes of variants, cancels, etc., but these fall somewhat short of the requirements of modern bibliography.
The second brochure is concerned with the separate printings of fifteen individual pieces which were issued simultaneously with their appearance in the volumes containing them. Our interest largely centres on *Faust*, not only because it is incomparably the most important, but also because of the still unsolved, and possibly insoluble, problem of the two variants. I must again refer readers to the *Times Literary Supplement* articles for a full discussion of the evidence and the gaps in it.

19. L. Brieger: *Ein Jahrhundert deutscher Erstausgaben.* Stuttgart, 1925.
This includes a short-title list of eighty-two Goethe first editions, and seven collected editions, with size, date, number of pages, brief notes of issue points and some auction records, between 1904 and 1924. These prices, if treated with the caution due to their kind, are some indication of comparative rarity. As they cover the inflation period, however, although given in gold Marks, they are occasionally more informative in relation to the flight from the Mark than as guides to rarity. Nevertheless, the fact, for example, that no auction record of *Brief des Pastors . . .* 1773 occurs between 1905 and 1923 is informative.

20. E. Schulte-Strathaus: *Bibliographie der Originalausgaben deutscher Dichtungen im Zeitalter Goethes. . . .* München u. Leipzig, 1913.
An absolutely indispensable work for collectors of the *Sturm und Drang* period.

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